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ABSTRACT

School districts in the Appalachia region have identified six particular types of families who have special needs related to the school, including: (1) families with low socioeconomic status; (2) single parent families; (3) two-job families; (4) families with chronically ill or handicapped children; (5) isolated rural families; and (6) minority families. A literature review, survey of each type of family, and interviews with school personnel showed variation in the degree to which each special need family differed from all other families. Families with low socioeconomic status were the most distinct as a group while two-job families were least distinct. Single parent families and families with handicapped children were more likely to perceive themselves as having special problems as parents. Minority parents held higher aspirations for their children than non-minority parents. Selected references are appended for each type of family. (Author/JAC)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN RELATION TO SCHOOLS

School-Family Relations Program
Deliverable #2-A

by

Mary B. Snow

TECHNICAL REPORT

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ABSTRACT

This report consists of six parts, each dealing with the characteristics of a particular type of family with implications for its relations with schools. The family types are (1) families with low socioeconomic status, (2) single-parent families, (3) two-job families, (4) families with chronically ill or handicapped children, (5) isolated rural families, and (6) minority families. These families are defined as special need families, meaning they have certain unique characteristics which we hypothesize call for special understanding and adjustments on the part of the schools if home and school are to work together cooperatively.

Each section presents a discussion of pertinent literature, an analysis of relevant data from the Regional Parenting Surveys (Base Sample Survey), insights from exploratory interviews with school staffs, and a brief summary and discussion.

Variation was found in the degree to which each special need family differed from all other families and the specific ways in which they differed. Families with low socioeconomic status were the most distinct as a group. Two-job families were least distinct. Variation was also found within family type (numbers 2-6) by socioeconomic level.

It is expected that these synopses will be used as a bases for working with schools to develop programs aimed at promoting good school-family relations.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide synopses of six special need family types which may be used as bases for developing programs to promote positive school-family relations. The goal was to seek an understanding of the meaning and consequences of the varied circumstances under which these special need families are currently rearing their children. All six are recognized as important family subgroups in the Region and in the country today. They are not, however, intended to be inclusive of all special need families.* It is also recognized that some families belong to more than one of the special need subgroups. Therefore, in addition to six unique subgroups, there are many different possible combinations to be considered in the application of these materials in a particular setting. It also became clear during this investigation that the special need families of greatest concern vary greatly by individual school, by school district, and by region.

The definition of "special need families" used in this study is that of recognizable groups of families living under varied and somewhat uncommon circumstances due to social location, social change, unique family circumstances, or some combination of these. This definition is not a pathological one; these families with unique characteristics are not viewed as "bad" or "inadequate," but as different than the norm (or what was considered the norm until recent years). But there is an assumption that these special life circumstances may call for special understanding and adjustments on the part of the schools if good home-school relations are to be promoted.

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*The presence of other important special need families was revealed in the course of the exploratory interviews in schools and with Advisory Group members. These will be discussed later.

The goal of this project is to work with schools in developing new, creative programs which will help special need families and schools to communicate and cooperate more effectively. It should be noted that positive school-family relations is more than the absence of poor relations or conflict. Many schools and families are not dissatisfied overall with their relationship but have a tendency to accept "what is." School staffs and parents are both very busy and tend to accept the fact that some parents are involved and some are not, or that some teachers show more interest in their child than others. Our investigations lead us to believe there is a greater potential for parent-school collaboration than is usually realized. And so in many cases, the goal will be to move the relationship from a good but passive one to a more active positive involvement of parents and school staffs with each other. The ultimate goal, of course, is to positively affect children's achievement and attitudes toward learning.

The special needs families discussed in this report are (1) families with low socioeconomic status, (2) single parent families, (3) two-job families, (4) families with chronically ill or handicapped children, (5) isolated rural families, and (6) minority families. Different perspectives on these special need families were sought. Information for the following six reports was drawn from (a) the literature on each special need family; (b) an analysis of data available from the Base Sample Survey of the Regional Parenting Surveys (responses of each special need subgroup were compared with the responses of all other parents in the sample to determine in what ways they differed or were alike in regard to background and child-rearing experiences and attitudes); and (c) exploratory interviews conducted with the School-Family Relations Advisory Group and with principals and some teachers and parents in six nearby schools. (The schools are representative of elementary, middle, and high schools in one

West Virginia county.) In each report, a brief discussion of the literature will provide a context within which the data from the Regional Parenting Surveys and the school-based interviews will be presented and interpreted.

#1. FAMILIES WITH LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Pertinent Literature

Children from low socioeconomic families have generally achieved at a lower level in school than have children from middle or upper socioeconomic backgrounds. Many studies have provided evidence of this relationship (Coleman, et al, 1966; Goldstein, 1967).

Searching for the reasons and for the means to change this situation has preoccupied numerous educators and researchers through the years. This was particularly apparent during the sixties. As a part of the War on Poverty, there was a concerted effort to "make up" to the low SES child for what might be lacking in his/her home environment, often referred to as "culturally deprived." Compensatory education and enrichment programs were provided to many poor children. During this period, the important role of the parent was highlighted. Some programs sent workers into the homes to teach parents of preschool children ways to stimulate and develop the child's ability to learn. Some of the best known of these were the DARCEE model (Peabody College), the Florida model (Ira Gordon), the Home Start option within Head Start, the HOPE model (Appalachia Educational Laboratory), and the Verbal-Interaction Project (Phyllis Levenstein). Head Start and other programs provided group enrichment experiences for children, as well as learning growth experiences for parents. When it became clear that attention at the preschool level was not enough to sustein gains, programs (e.g., Follow Through) were developed and funded (Title I) to provide compensatory education on into the elementary school experience.

During this period, educators and researchers were also learning to view low SES families in a different light. New theories were developed. Some of

these recognized that although the family life of the poor child might not have prepared him/her in many ways for the middle class school system, these family environments were generally very rich and valuable in other ways. In this view, the term "cultural deprivation" represents a value judgment, the result of looking at the world through the lenses of white middle class culture. In contrast, the use of a bicultural model can explain how people may learn and practice both mainstream culture and ethnic/class culture at the same time (Baratz and Baratz, 1970; Keddie, 1973; and Valentine, 1971a). Out of these theories came the recommendation that schools need to become acquainted with and to understand their children's and parents' life circumstances, and secondly to appreciate the positive aspects of these family environments and to build on them in their work with children. It is then possible for parents and teachers to relate to each other with dignity and respect, rather than on the basis of superiority and inferiority.

An example of a program designed to improve the quality of low-income schools through the planned collaboration of the school and the parents is described in Comer (1980). The Yale Child Study Center in the New Haven school system developed representative management groups in these schools, consisting of the principal, teachers, parents, and older students. These groups planned, identified school problems and opportunities, established goals, mobilized resources, etc. In the course of this coordinated process, school people and parents and children learned from each other. Over a period of several years, attitudes, relationships, and academic achievement improved. However, in order for such a collaborative effort to work, Comer believes that principals, teachers, and parents must be prepared and trained to work in this way (Comer, 1980).

Despite the emphasis on this particular special need family group during the sixties and seventies, the successes of individual programs, and the increasing numbers of these children who have gone on into higher education, the relationship between low SES and low achievement can still be found. One way to study this relationship is by seeking a greater understanding of the parents. Do they differ from other parents in their practices, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, or awareness in significant ways?

Regional Parenting Surveys Data

A subsample of 231 parents representing families with low socioeconomic status was drawn from the Base Sample Survey of the Regional Parenting Surveys. This criterion of low socioeconomic status used in this analysis was that neither the respondent nor the spouse of the respondent had completed high school. If one or both parents had graduated from high school or more, the family was designated high SES. The responses of the low SES parents were compared with the responses of all other parents in the survey. Tests of significance were run for all variables.

Parenting Situation

Background characteristics. Most parents in both the low SES and the high SES group were members of nuclear families. However, the percentage of single parents was higher in the low SES group (23%) than in the high SES group (14%). Likewise, although the overwhelming majority of all the families were white, blacks were more highly represented among the low SES group (12%) than among the high SES group (5%). There was also a tendency for low SES families to have lived longer in the community than was true of high SES families. And although by our definition of low SES parents, they have not completed a high

school education, only 20 percent of this subsample planned to return to school in the future, compared to 32 percent of the high SES group.

Preparation for parenthood. Most parents in both groups said they did not have a clear idea of what being a parent would be like before becoming one. High SES parents, not surprisingly, were much more likely to have had a course in school to help prepare them for parenthood (low SES, 18%; high SES, 47%). However, of just those who had experienced such a course, there was virtually no difference in perceived usefulness of the course (low SES, 68%; high SES, 67%). The majority in both groups wanted to pass on some advice (about parenting) to their children; however, high SES parents were somewhat more likely to reply "yes" (low SES, 68%; high SES, 84%). What they wanted to pass on was similar; most frequently mentioned were "be ready, not too young"; "have patience"; and "have love."

Sharing of responsibility. The majority of both groups of parents indicated that they shared responsibility for the child's care and upbringing with at least one other adult (beside their spouses). However, just who these persons were varied. Among low SES families, the child's older sibling was much more likely to be named than was true of high SES families (low SES, 34%; high SES, 24%). Maternal grandparents were important in this role for both groups, but especially so for high SES parents. Paternal grandparents were also more likely to be named by high SES parents rather than low SES parents.

Formal Contacts

Contacts with teachers and doctors. Low SES parents participating in the parenting survey indicated that they had had less contact with formal sources of help (teachers, doctors) than had high SES parents. Within the past year, low SES parents were less likely to have talked often or fairly often to their

child's teacher (low SES, 54%; high SES, 78%) and were more likely to have talked seldom or never (low SES, 46%; high SES, 22%). However, low SES parents were almost as positive in their attitudes toward their talks with teachers as were high SES parents (very or somewhat helpful: low SES, 82%; high SES, 91%). When asked whether their talks with teachers could be more helpful, slightly less than one-half of both groups agreed that they could. Parents in both groups valued parent-teacher talks in which (a) they received specific information, (b) the teacher indicated the child had improved, (c) the teacher was cooperative, and (d) the teacher showed genuine interest. Low SES parents were most likely to feel that teachers should listen more and have good communication.

With regard to contacts with the medical profession, although the majority of parents in both groups had talked with a doctor (about child) one to three times within the past year, low SES parents were more likely to have talked to no one in the medical profession (low SES, 39%; high SES, 26%). Again, both groups of parents were extremely positive about their medical contacts on behalf of their child (very or somewhat helpful: low SES, 82%; high SES, 90%). Both groups valued a doctor who (a) gave information, (b) was helpful and cured illness, and (c) was reassuring. Low SES parents were especially likely to want more information and explanation from doctors. When asked whether their talks with members of the medical profession could be more helpful, high SES parents were more likely to say they could be improved (low SES, 33%; high SES, 43%), whereas low SES parents were more likely to say "don't know" (low SES, 37%; high SES, 22%). Evidently, these were different ways of expressing dissatisfaction.

Looking at the number of times the child was absent during the past year revealed that being absent a few times was slightly more likely for high SES

children; however, among those absent eight (8) or more times, low SES children were more highly represented.

Organizational membership. Parents in the low socioeconomic group were significantly less likely to belong to a community organization than were other members.

Membership in Community Organizations

	Low SES Families	High SES Families
Belonged to no organizations	60%	24%
Belonged to one or more organizations	40%	76%

Looking at just those in both groups who did belong to organizations, 47 percent of the low SES parents (compared to 59 percent of the high SES parents) belonged to an organization that provided help and advice on child rearing.

Awareness of local programs/services. Contrary to expectations, there was very little difference between the two groups of parents in awareness of the different types of local programs and services available to parents and children. The majority of both groups were unaware of three (3) program types: programs that provide preparation for parenthood, programs for more effective parenting, and programs to provide for parents' own needs as individuals. Slightly over one-half (1/2) of both groups were aware of the fourth program type--programs for parents facing difficult situations.

Informal Contacts

Contacts with other parents. It might be supposed that the lesser number of formal contacts on the part of low SES parents (see above) could be due to a sense of unease, feeling uncomfortable with "experts" in their fields. This would not apply to talks with other parents, one's peers who would tend to be of similar social background. However, this study indicated that low SES parents

not only talked less to professionals but also talked less to other parents (about their children or child rearing, in general) than was true for high SES parents. Among low SES parents, 56 percent talked often or fairly often with other parents, compared to 74 percent of the high SES parents. However, the great majority of both groups felt positively about their contacts with other parents (low SES, 77%; high SES, 87%). The greatest benefit of these talks, according to both groups, was "an opportunity to share and compare with other parents."

Availability of a confidant. The majority of parents in both groups had a confidant, someone close with whom they especially liked to discuss their child, although the percentage was somewhat higher for high SES parents (low SES, 65%; high SES, 77%). Most parents in both groups agreed that talks with their confidants were helpful because these persons were "understanding," "had had experience with children," or "had children the same age." "Obtaining information/getting new ideas" was somewhat more important for high SES parents.

Media Contacts

Although the majority among both groups of parents had not read anything about child rearing in recent months, low SES parents were consistently less likely to have read something.

Had Read Something about Child Rearing in Recent Months

	Low SES Families	High SES Families
In a magazine	19%	47%
In a newspaper	12%	29%
In a pamphlet or newsletter	7%	21%
In a book	15%	30%

However, this was not the case for television. Slightly less than one-half (1/2) in both groups had seen a television program about parents and children in recent months (low SES, 42%; high SES, 48%).

When asked how reading material could be more helpful, low SES parents were slightly more likely to say that such readings needed to be in laymen's terms.

Attitudes and Needs

Attitudes. Most parents in both groups agreed that "in today's world, everyone needs some kind of help in rearing children" (yes: low SES, 73%; high SES, 79%). The specific sources of advice and help were also similar with "own parents or in-laws" ranking first; "prayer, Bible, church" second; and "friends/neighbors" third. The ideal parents were described similarly by both groups as parents who were patient, spent time with child, and loved child.

Aspirations. As it is known that low SES children tend to achieve at a lower level in school than high SES children, it might be expected that low SES parents' aspirations for their children would also be lower. However, the Regional Parenting Surveys data do not bear this out. The highest percent in both groups wanted their children to have a college education (low SES, 44%; high SES, 52%). However, it was also true that the low SES parents appeared to be more satisfied with a high school education for their children than were the high SES parents (low SES, 31%; high SES, 15%). "As far as child wants to" was expressed by 26 percent of the high SES parents and 20 percent of the low SES parents. Qualities most highly desired for their children as adults were "caring, loving"; "respectable, trustworthy"; and "own person." When asked "Who or what will influence (child's) future?", the three most highly rated influences were respondent, spouse, and the schools.

Who or What Will Influence Child's Future a Great Deal?

	Low SES Parents	High SES Parents
Respondent	67%	78%
Spouse	60%	73%
School	69%	67%
Government	29%	20%
Anyone Else	24%	40%

The difference in the order is of interest. Low SES parents ranked the schools at the top of the list, followed by themselves (respondents) and their spouses. High SES parents ranked themselves (respondent) highest, followed by spouses and then by the schools. Although both rated themselves as important influences on their child's future, high SES parents evidently believed themselves to have more influence.

Perceived needs. These questions were asked to tap the perceived needs of parents:

(1) Do you feel you have special problems as a parent?

(2) Do you have any unanswered questions, something that's on your mind right now (related to parenting)?

(3) Is there any particular kind of help for parents that is not available locally but which you feel is needed?

The majority in both groups responded "no" to these needs. The only difference was found in the response to item two. High SES parents were more likely to say that they had unanswered questions than were low SES parents (low SES, 13%; high SES, 27%). In response to the other questions, approximately one-fifth (1/5) to one-fourth (1/4) of both groups said "yes," that they felt such a need. Specific explanations also yielded similar results, with some exceptions. For example, low SES parents were much more likely than high SES parents to say that a recreation center for young people was needed.

Exploratory School Interviews

Everyone interviewed, without exception, agreed that families with low socioeconomic status should be included in a study of special needs families and the schools. The School-Family Relations Advisory Group members gave several reasons for their opinions. They felt that these parents would be more likely to have basic skills deficiencies which would make it difficult for them to understand and help their children with their school work, especially in the middle and high school levels. As a result, their children are at risk of growing up with basic skill deficiencies. It was also believed that within these families, the chances are great that the parents have had negative past experiences with schools. And within this region, some families with low socioeconomic status were characterized by frequent movements back and forth between a city and their original home in a rural county.

All the schools we visited reported that their school population represented a wide range of socioeconomic levels. And so families with low socioeconomic status were a concern in all six schools. But they were a central concern in two of the schools, both because they made up a significant proportion of the families served and because some of these were families living in extreme poverty. For example, one elementary principal told us that her major concern was for "children who don't get enough to eat at home (they are provided breakfast and lunch at school), live in poor housing (no running water), and often come to school dirty." These parents usually do not respond to messages from the school and have no phone. In some few cases, the children simply do not attend school for more than a few days a year. The principal went on to say that the children who are worse off are the ones "whose families refuse help" and "who are not accepted by the other children."

We also discovered that there are other families besides those in extreme poverty who fall within the category of families with low socioeconomic status. There are families who have long been on welfare. And there are families not on welfare, but with marginal jobs which provide no benefits. And there are what may be called the "new poor" families,* those who have recently become unemployed due to the many closings and layoffs at plants in the area. In one school, the principal estimated that the majority of parents were currently out of work. Some evidence of the result could be found in an increase of applications for free lunches, fewer dues-paying PTA members, and a decrease in the money which could be raised through school functions. Thus, it is clear that families with low socioeconomic status can in reality, mean many different family situations.

Adding to the complexity of understanding this category of families is the fact that there are some low socioeconomic families who also fit into one or more other special need categories. For example, the families in extreme poverty described to us by the elementary school principal were also very rural families. Another example was provided by a middle school counselor who commented that the low socioeconomic families who are also single-parent families are of particular concern to their school. And a high school special education teacher referred to three of the special need categories when she explained that "the educable handicapped students (in their school) tend to be from the more deprived family backgrounds, from the hollows and the creeks. These are the parents it is difficult for a teacher to get any response from."

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*It is recognized that our measure of low SES would not make it likely that these families would be included in the category. These parents have always been able, until recently, to support their families. It is assumed that their experiences, background, etc., would be different from that of long-term poor families.

Summary and Discussion

The differentiating power of socioeconomic status was confirmed by the analysis of the Regional Parenting Surveys data and the exploratory interviews with school staffs.

The comparison of low socioeconomic status respondents (Regional Parenting Surveys) with all other respondents revealed important differences as well as similarities.

Low socioeconomic respondents differed from all other respondents in the following ways:

- less contact during the past year with formal sources of help in child rearing (teachers, doctors),
- less likely to belong to one or more community organizations,
- less contact with other parents (about children),
- less likely to have read anything about child rearing in recent months,
- less likely to be planning to obtain more education for self,
- less likely to have "unanswered questions" about raising children,
- more likely for child to have been absent from school eight or more times during the past year,
- more likely to share responsibility for the sample child with the child's older sibling,
- more likely to be a single parent (although the majority was not), and
- more likely to be a member of a minority (although the majority was not).

The two groups were similar in the following ways:

- positive attitudes toward talks with teachers and with doctors (about child),
- positive attitudes toward talks with other parents (about children),

- aspiration for children (all tended to be high),
- awareness of local programs/services (low for both groups), and
- agreement on the three influences perceived to have the greatest impact on child's future: self (respondent), spouse, and school (differences only in rank order).

Thus, low socioeconomic respondents appear to be less tied into formal or informal networks which affect child rearing than are other parents. However, positive attitudes toward such contacts may indicate a potential for greater involvement. There is evidence of a strong faith in the power of education and a desire for children to attain a high level of education.

The exploratory interviews pointed up the complexity of the socioeconomic variable. There are many different levels within the designation "families with low socioeconomic status." And many low SES families also fall into other special need categories, such as isolated rural, single parent, or families with handicapped children. As will be seen in the reports to follow, the SES variable often significantly differentiates parents within the other special need categories.

#2. SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Pertinent Literature

Since 1960 there has been a definite trend away from traditional households toward more varied living arrangements. One of these changes has been an increase in the percent of single-parent families, while the percent of all families headed by a married couple has dropped (Masnick and Bane, 1980, pp. 20-24). Approximately 20 percent of all households with children under 18 are now single-parent households. This means that 11 million children under 18 live in single-parent homes (Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 1981). Nine-tenths of these single-parent families consist of women and children.* The single-parent experience may be short or long term. A large majority of single parents do remarry.** It is true that, although most Americans still live in conventional nuclear families, an increasing number of children will spend part of their lives in single-parent households. Fifty percent (50%) or one (1) out of two (2) children born today are expected to experience the single-parent family situation before age 18 (Masnick and Bane, 1980; Russell, 1981). For these reasons, it is important to consider the meaning of this experience for both parent and child.

Disadvantages for the Parent

The income of single-parent families headed by women is much less, in general, than that of the two-parent households. There are many factors that

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*This report will focus on single-parent families headed by women. However, it is acknowledged that single-parent families headed by men are increasingly an important segment of this group.

**It is important not to overemphasize this possibility. Some organizations have used this as an excuse for not providing programs/services for the single-parent family.

contribute to this fact, but some of the major ones are (a) the most important source of income for the family is usually the mother's earnings; (b) women in general have had less work experiences and less training for work than men; and (c) most single-parent women work in traditional "female" occupations where pay scales are low and many work either part-time, part-year, or intermittently (Masnick and Bane, 1980, pp. 94-100).

The single parent is usually pressed for money and for time. The parent is stressed due to heavy work, emotional, and responsibility loads. Having to take care of everything alone, without relief, and to worry about being a good parent often results in depression. The single parent tends to feel guilty because she can't be with the child as much as she would like, can't be at all school functions, etc. (Options in Education Series, 1980-81).

Negative assumptions and attitudes of others also make the single parent's job difficult. She is scrutinized by others who expect her not to be able to cope, who perceive the single-parent home as a broken, deficient home. She also often faces discrimination. Landlords may not want to rent to her, believing that the children will be running wild and unsupervised or that she won't be able to take care of the yard, minor problems, etc. Other stresses can come from the fact that former friends (couples) of her and her ex-husband cannot usually be counted on for support (Klein, 1973; Russell, 1981).

Disadvantages for the Child

Children often find it difficult, in the beginning, to adjust to living with one parent. They may feel that the situation is somehow their fault or they may blame the single parent for these changes. When this change occurs, children also tend to feel that they are alone, that no one else has had to go through such an experience. However, after the initial adjustment,

probably the biggest problem is having to live with others' negative perceptions of her/his family as "broken," "deficient," "unhealthy," etc. In these cases, the child is made to feel that something is very wrong with her/his family life. Related to this is a tendency for others to expect less of the child--to expect him/her to be depressed, to do less well in school, to be a behavior problem. This can be disastrous as lack of expectation for good performance, behavior, etc., can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Even the single parent may fall into the trap of blaming herself and excusing the child for poor performance. When this happens, the child will not perform well and this can lead to low self-esteem. "The more we expect of children, the more they feel valued. The way we value people is to expect something" (Options in Education Series, 1980-81).

Advantages for Parent and Child

Single parents learn to be self-reliant, independent, and confident. They report that since they cannot spend as much time as they would like with their children, they make an effort to see that the time spent is "quality" time. Little things, small events, related to their children become very meaningful. Single parents often are able to reach out to others in the same situation and form informal support groups which may even include an exchange of goods and services. Others may find support in formal organizations such as Parents Without Partners or church groups (Options in Education Series, 1980-81; Klein, 1973, pp. 181-208).

Children of single-parent families become independent earlier and must take on more responsibility than other children. At the same time, the children and parents are more likely to relate as equals. Children are more likely to be involved in family decision-making than is true of two-parent families.

They learn to negotiate disagreements. It has been reported that a greater closeness and a stronger relationship may develop between the single parent and her children than might have been the case otherwise (Options in Education Series, 1980-81; Russell, 1981).

Are All Single Parent Families Alike?

In some ways, of course, all single-parent families are similar. But as more research is carried out, it is more and more clear that the differences may also be great and that, therefore, the single-parent experience can be expected to vary. A recent presentation on one-parent homes stressed the necessity of taking two vital factors into account: (1) the socioeconomic status of the single-parent family, and (2) how recently the change had been made from a dual-parent to a single-parent household. Socioeconomic status will affect the resources and supports available to the family. Timing is crucial as the parent and children would be expected to experience a period of adjustment. Later, however, one would expect that a sense of stability would have been established, allowing all members to get on with their lives. Still a third suggestion was to look at single-parent families by region of the country. Region may also affect resources, programs, services, and supports available to the family which, in turn, affects adjustment and quality of the family environment (Finn, 1981).

How Do Schools Respond to the Single-Parent Family?

Schools vary in their responses to the single-parent family. Some operate on the old negative perception of a single-parent home as being less than desirable by definition. Some expect poor performance and bad behavior from the child and lack of interest/involvement on the part of the single parent.

Some schools, however, perceive the single-parent family not as inferior but as a unique family with its own particular set of problems. Some schools have actively sought to support these families. Some ways this has been done are listed below:

- Workshops have been held for teachers on the needs of children from single-parent families. Teachers are made aware of stresses often experienced by the single parent and the child. Teachers are encouraged to be generally supportive of the single-parent child, not lowering expectations but helping him/her to feel comfortable and secure.

- School counselors have arranged for children from single-parent families to meet regularly as a group in order to discuss their situations. It has been found that children feel freer to talk to other children in a like situation than to either their parents or a teacher.

- In some schools, teachers have arranged to have parent/teacher conferences at night to accommodate working parents.

- Principals have scheduled evening office hours once a week in order to encourage communications with single parents and others who find it difficult to come during the day.

- In some schools, the curriculum has included a time to discuss feelings, e.g., "things that make you happy, things that make you angry, things that make you afraid," which provide all children a chance to express themselves and to find out that they are not so different from their peers.

- In some schools, a mechanism for identifying one-parent families has been instituted, with principals making sure that the information is given to the teachers (Options in Education, 1980-81; Institute for Development of Educational Activity, 1980).

There is still much to learn about single-parent families which would be helpful to schools and other organizations that work with families. For example, how long do children live in single-parent households? How much contact do they have with the nonresident parent? Are there other surrogate parents who provide significant amounts of child care? Masnick and Bane say that "children are increasingly members of more than one household" (1980, p.29).

Children of single-parent families may, therefore, have more opportunities for interactions outside their household (nonresident parent, surrogate parent, caretakers while mother is working, etc.) than is true for other children. We know little about the effects of these changing interaction patterns on children.

Regional Parenting Surveys Data

Within the parenting survey sample of 1,113 respondents, 178 single-parent families were represented. One hundred forty-one (141) of these households consisted of only the single parent and children; 37 single parents and their children lived in an extended family situation with other related adults present.

Responses of all single parents were first compared with the responses of all respondents from two-parent families. Then the responses of each were examined within low or high socioeconomic level.* Among the single parents, 56 fall into the low socioeconomic category and 122 into the high socioeconomic category. Among the two-parent family respondents, 181 were low socioeconomic status and 754 were high socioeconomic status.

Parenting Situation

Background characteristics. Single-parent families were much more likely to be found in urban counties than in rural ones.

Family Type by Region

	Single-Parent Families	Two-Parent Families
Rural	38%	61%
Urban	62%	39%

*The measure used to determine high or low socioeconomic level was described in the previous section.

Although most of the respondents in both groups were white, the percent of blacks was higher among the single-parent group (26%) than among the two-parent group (4%). Viewed by socioeconomic level and by family type, it was found that black single parents were predominant within the low socioeconomic level.

There were only slight differences in the educational levels of the single-parent group and the two-parent group.

Educational Level

	Single-Parent Group	Two-Parent Group
Less than high school	34%	28%
High school	39%	43%
More than high school	27%	29%

However, single-parent respondents were significantly more likely to have plans to return to school in the future than was true of the non-single respondents (single parents, 39%; non-single parents, 27%). Viewed within socioeconomic level, those most likely to be planning a return to school were members of the high SES, single-parent subgroup (44%).

Parents Who Planned to Return to School

	Single	Non-Single
Low SES	29%	17%
High SES	44%	30%

Preparation for parenthood. Approximately two-thirds (2/3) of both the single parents and the non-single parents said they had not had a clear idea of what parenting would be like before becoming parents. Most parents would like to pass on something to their children about parenting (single parents, 78%; non-single parents, 81%). This was more true of high SES subgroups (85%, 84%) than low SES groups (68%, 67%). What parents most wanted to pass

on was (a) "be ready, not too young"; (b) "have patience, trust, understanding"; and (c) "have love and the ability to express love."

The sharing of responsibility. The majority of both subgroups indicated that they shared responsibility for the sample child with one or more other adults besides spouse (single parents, 90%; non-single parents, 83%).

Who did parents share this responsibility with? The child's maternal grandparents and relatives other than the child's grandparents were most frequently named by all subgroups. Dependence upon an older sibling was more characteristic of low SES families (single or two-parent) than of high SES families. It was particularly true of low SES single-parent families (38%). Maternal grandparents were more frequently named by high SES families, particularly by high SES single-parent families (61%).

Formal Contacts

Contacts with Teachers. Overall, single parents were found to talk slightly less often with their child's teacher than did other parents. Both groups had a positive attitude toward their talks with teachers (very helpful: single parents, 58%; non-single parents, 56%). Yet slightly over two-thirds (2/3) of both subgroups indicated that there was room for improvement, that the parent-teacher talks could be more helpful.

When viewed within SES level, it became clear that SES was more strongly associated with frequency of talks with teachers than was single or two-parent family type.

Frequency of Parent Talks with Teachers

	Low SES		High SES	
	Single	Non-Single	Single	Non-Single
Talked often or fairly often	49%	56%	71%	79%

Contacts with doctors. Single-parent families were more likely to have just one medical contact; two-parent families were more likely to have two or more medical contacts. The number of talks with doctors (concerning child) within the past year was similar for both groups. As was the case for teachers, the majority of both parent groups had positive attitudes toward their talks with doctors, but also indicated that these talks could be improved.

When SES level was held constant, it was clear that low SES families (whether single, 36%; or non-single, 40%) were more likely to never have consulted a doctor (about child) than was true for high SES families (single, 24%; non-single, 26%).

Organizational membership. In comparing single parents with non-single parents, it was found that single parents were slightly more likely to belong to no community organization (single parents, 38%; non-single parents, 30%). Of just those who belonged to an organization, single parents also appeared less likely to belong to groups that provide help and advice on child rearing (single, 48%; non-single, 60%). However, when viewed within SES level, the picture changed. High SES respondents, both single and non-single, were most likely to belong to one or more community organizations; low SES non-single respondents were least likely to do so.

Membership in Community Organizations

	Low SES		High SES	
	Single	Non-Single	Single	Non-Single
Belong to one or more organizations	54%	37%	66%	78%

Of just those who belonged to organizations, the subgroup most likely to belong to organizations that provide help and advice on child rearing were the high SES, non-single parents (62%). Approximately 50 percent of the other

three subgroups belonged to this type of organization. All those who belonged to this type of organization valued them because they provided opportunities "to discuss and compare with other parents" and "to find out what our children are doing."

Awareness of local programs and services. The majority of both single parents and non-single parents was unaware of community programs/services that provided preparation for parenthood, training for more effective parenting, and opportunities for parents to fulfill their own needs. Slightly over one-half (1/2) were aware of programs/services to help families facing difficult situations. This was only slightly more true for single parents (61%) than for non-single parents (55%). By SES and family type, low SES single parents were most likely (68%) to be aware of programs for families facing difficult situations.

Informal Contacts

Contacts with other parents. Viewed overall, single parents were slightly more likely to talk often to other parents (about their children or child rearing, in general), although differences were not great (talked often: single, 51%; non-single, 45%). Both subgroups were very positive about the helpfulness of these talks (single, 79%; non-single, 87%).

When viewed within SES level, all subgroups were similar, except the low SES non-single subgroup who talked less often.

Availability of a confidant. Overall, the majority of both groups said they had a favorite person to discuss their child with (single parent, 71%; non-single parent, 75%). High SES subgroups were most likely to name a confidant (single parent, 75%; non-single parent, 77%); low SES subgroups were somewhat less likely to do so (single, 63%; non-single, 66%).

Who where these confidants most likely to be? For all subgroups, the following received the most mentions: "Relative other than child's grandparent," "friend/neighbor," and a "maternal grandparent."

Media Contacts

Only a minority of all parents had recently read anything about child rearing. Comparing only the two groups, it appears that single parents were somewhat less likely than non-single parents to have read something about child rearing in a magazine, a book, or in the newspaper. However, once again, it was discovered that the real differentiating factor was SES rather than family type.

Percent Who Had Recently Read About Child Rearing

	Low SES		High SES	
	Single	Non-Single	Single	Non-Single
In a magazine	21%	20%	40%	49%
In a newspaper	5%	13%	28%	30%
In a book	11%	15%	25%	31%

Parental Attitudes and Needs

Attitudes. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the single parents and 77 percent of the non-single parents agreed that "most parents today need some kind of help in rearing their children." Viewed by SES and family type, only the low SES non-single respondents were less likely to agree that parents need help (69%). The other three subgroups were similar in their responses (high SES single, 82%; high SES non-single, 79%; and low SES single, 82%).

The ideal mother was described by single parents and non-single parents as one who (a) has patience and understanding, (b) loves children, and (c) spends time with children.

The ideal characteristics for a father were also similar for both groups. In order of importance, they were (a) spends time with children, (b) is patient, and (c) loves children.

Aspirations. Aspirations for their children were very similar for single parents and non-single parents. By SES and family type, only the low SES, non-single subgroup had lower aspirations than all the others. Only 41 percent of these parents would like their children to get a college education, compared to over 50 percent of the other three subgroups.

Closely related to aspirations are parents' beliefs concerning the persons or institutions which will have the greatest impact on their child's future. In general, these responses were similar for both single and two-parent family respondents. One exception was the predictably lower influence accorded the spouse or ex-spouse by the single-parent respondent (a great deal of influence: single parents, 22%; non-single parents, 79%). Another difference was that single parents were more likely to rate the government as having "a great deal" of impact (single parents, 31%; non-single parents, 21%).

When family types were viewed within SES levels, the low rating for the influence of spouses remained characteristic of single parents. The higher rating by single parents of the influence of the government was largely accounted for by the responses of the low SES single-parent subgroup. High SES respondents of both family types tended to rate their own influence somewhat higher than did low SES respondents. High SES respondents were also more likely to name "other" influences. High ratings for the influence of the school remained true for all subgroups.

Who or What Will Influence Child's Future a Great Deal?

	Low SES		High SES	
	Single	Non-Single	Single	Non-Single
Respondent	68%	66%	75%	78%
Spouse	18%	72%	25%	80%
School	71%	69%	66%	67%
Government	43%	25%	25%	20%
Anyone else or anything	29%	24%	41%	40%

Perceived needs. Single parents and non-single parents were similar in their responses to two of the three questions designed to tap perceived needs. Those were, "Do you have any unanswered questions?" to which 22 percent of the single parents and 23 percent of the non-single parents replied "yes;" and "Is there any particular type of needed help for parents that is not available locally?" to which 23 percent of both subgroups said "yes." But there was a significant difference revealed in responses to the question, "Do you feel you have special problems as a parent?". Forty-nine percent (49%) of the single parents replied "yes" to this question, compared to only 17 percent of the non-single respondents.

Comparisons by both family type and SES level were revealing. Having "unanswered questions" was more closely related to SES than to family type. High SES respondents of both family types were more likely to have "unanswered questions." However, high SES single parents were most likely of all subgroups to have questions.

The perception that "needed help is not available" was also related more to high SES than to family type. The relationship between being a single parent and feeling one has "special problems as a parent" remained true within

SES levels, although it was more pronounced for high SES single parents than for low SES single parents.

"Yes" Responses to Perceived Need Questions

	Low SES		High SES	
	Single	Non-Single	Single	Non-Single
Do you feel you have special problems as a parent?	36%	14%	56%	17%
Do you have unanswered questions about parenting?	14%	13%	30%	26%
Is there any kind of needed help for parents that is not available?	14%	18%	26%	24%

Exploratory School Interviews

Children from single-parent families constituted a significant proportion of the school population in four of the six schools visited. However, in the two most rural schools, their numbers were very small.

A common response to questions about single-parent families was that "they don't cause any particular problem" or "their needs are not really that different." One principal indicated that being a single parent used to be more of a problem, but that in recent years, these parents have learned to deal with their situations. There was a recognition that teachers need to be aware of and sensitive to single-parent families.

In the course of the interviews, however, it became clear that although single-parent families per se aren't viewed as being very different from other families, particular single-parent situations are viewed as creating problems requiring special consideration by the schools. One example is the families going through the transition from dual- to single-parent status. Children whose parents are in the process of separating, getting a divorce, are often affected adversely. At one high school, we were told about group sessions available

to these children in which they could discuss their situations with other children who had gone through a similar experience. Custody fights also occur, and children may be shuttled back and forth between parents and other relatives while decisions are being made.

Another group of great concern is single teenage mothers. These girls usually drop out of school, have their babies, and continue to live with their families. They often become very isolated within their family groups, especially those in more rural areas. In this particular county, there are few support services for these young mothers; only a few manage to continue in school and to graduate.

Also mentioned by school staffs as very common are children from step-families. The general impression is that many families are changing over time and it is difficult for schools to keep up with these changes. It is not always easy for school personnel even to know whether a child is living with both her/his parents, with one parent, or with a parent and a stepparent, etc. Yet without this knowledge, it is not possible for schools to respond to special needs.

Summary and Discussion

In Regional Parenting Surveys data, single parents were found to be significantly different from all other parents in only a few ways. Single parents were:

- more likely to live in an urban county rather than a rural county,
- more likely to be a member of a minority (although most were white),
- more likely to be planning a return to school for themselves, and
- more likely to perceive themselves as having "special problems as a parent."

The single parents were similar to other parents in the following ways:

- sharing responsibility for their child with other adults (true of the majority),
- aspirations held for child (tended to be high), and
- frequency of talks with other parents (the majority talked often or fairly often).

During the analysis, it became clear that the following characteristics were more strongly associated with high SES than with any family type:

- frequent talks with teacher or doctor (about child),
- membership in community organizations,
- reading about child rearing,
- having unanswered questions about child rearing, and
- a perception that needed help was not available.

This study upheld the position that single-parent families should not be viewed as one homogeneous group. Rather it is necessary to look for and study the many different kinds of single-parent families.

The special needs of parents and children in families undergoing transition and of single teenage mothers were highlighted by the school-based interviews.

#3. TWO-JOB FAMILIES

Pertinent Literature

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor (1981), among married couples with children, there were 14.9 million (59.8%) in which both spouses were earners during 1980. Only 7 million (28.2%) of these families still conformed to the traditional pattern in which the father, but not the mother, worked outside the home.

One of the major changes in American family life in recent years has been the unprecedented and steadily increasing rate with which women have joined the paid labor force. The greatest rate of change has been among those women with children under 18 who previously had tended to stay at home. The sharpest increase of all has been among mothers with young children. These two-job families are likely to have more money and less time than one-job families of similar background, social class, etc.

However, a recent study of family trends (Masnick and Bane, 1980, pp. 85-94) revealed that most working women have part-time or part-year jobs or have worked only intermittently over a period of years. Working wives contributed only about one-fourth (1/4) of the family income.* Because of the lesser commitment to work by the majority of working women, their particular life circumstances are somewhat different from those of the fewer two-career families in which there is long-term commitment to work on the part of both parents.** In the dual-worker family, the attitude of both husband and wife

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*That the one-fourth was very important is indicated by the fact that in many cases, these additional earnings allowed families to move out of poverty.

**In this report, the following definitions are in use. Two-job families refers to all families in which the husband and wife are in the paid labor force; two-worker families refers to those families in which the wife's commitment is less than that of the husband; and two-career families refers to those families in which there is high commitment to work on the part of both the husband and the wife.

toward the wife's work is that of "helping out" on a short-term basis. There is a tendency for both partners to continue to view their true roles as the traditional roles (wife as mother and homemaker, husband as breadwinner) even though, in fact, many household tasks may be shared. In both the two-worker and two-career families, studies tell us that, in general, the woman continues to carry the responsibility for (if not actually the performance of) the housework and child care. Real role sharing is not commonly found. Therefore, the wife is subject to more pressure, to more competing demands on her time and energy (Holmstrom, 1972; Lein and Blehar, 1979; Rapaport and Rapaport, 1978). When the husband is not supportive, the situation can become intolerable. Holmstrom (1972) found that among two-career families, lack of support by the husband led either to the wife withdrawing from the labor force or the dissolution of the marriage.

The greatest concern for both two-worker or two-career families is that of providing satisfactory care for their children. Two-career families have the advantage of greater ability to pay for live-in housekeepers, a regular babysitter, or day care centers. Two-worker families may have more flexibility in terms of time (working part-time, part-year, etc.). However, for both types of families, each couple must work out their own individual ad hoc solution to the problem. In this country, there are few institutionalized solutions. The availability of formal child care is very limited. Seldom do employers provide child care facilities or allow flexible work schedules for parents. And among two-career families, geographic mobility associated with mobility up the career ladder results in the likelihood that extended family members will not be close enough to assist in day-to-day child care. An intensive study of two-worker families in Boston (Lein and Blehar, 1979) found that the

child care arrangements used tended to be informal and either free or relatively inexpensive. If husband and wife worked on different schedules, child care could be covered by one or the other, at least for most of the time. (This arrangement did have disadvantages: it limited the type of job a woman would take and it decreased the amount of time a couple had to spend together.) Others had informal give-and-take child care arrangements with other families in the neighborhood. (This usually worked out only if the mothers were working part-time.) Only a few families used out-of-home paid day care for any length of time. The norm, especially for families with two or more children, some in school and some not, was to use multiple care strategies. In these cases, the complicated scheduling involved created great pressure, particularly on the mother. And such arrangements were also subject to easily falling apart with any small change, for example, the illness of a babysitter's husband (Lein and Blehar, 1979, pp. 306-311).

Masnick and Bane (1980, pp. 62-82) project that the revolution is yet to come in women's participation in the work force. They predict that by 1990, more women will be working full-time and continuously; there will be greater attachment to work and an increase in earnings. They also expect that the next decade will see a shift toward more non-parental child care. With more income available, families may make greater use of nursery schools, day care centers, and other paid child care. There may also be a demand on the school to provide preschool and after-school care. Reasons for the belief that in the future the norm for women will be high and continuing attachment to the labor force even through the childbearing period include: changing economic pressures and demands, and changing attitudes toward women's and men's roles.

Keeping these predictions in mind, it is interesting to look again at Lein and Blehar's study of two-worker families. They found that even though there was a reluctance to give up the traditional roles, the experience of living in a two-worker household usually brought about changes in both partners. Many of the men interviewed said the necessity of sharing in tasks at home had caused them to "rethink their roles as husband, father, and worker" (Lein and Blehar, 1979, p. 316). With the experience of more involvement in the care of their children, they became more confident and saw themselves as better fathers than their fathers had been. And many wives began, over time, to view outside employment as a "regular and normal" part of their lives. They began to think of their work less as "helping out" and more in terms of a career (Lein and Blehar, 1979, p. 316).

It is very clear from the studies that have been done of two-worker or two-career families that there is no question but that these parents value their children highly and are very concerned for their well-being and development. Many of their decisions about the kind of work to engage in, where, for how long, etc., are directly related to these concerns for their children. Not much is known about the effects of two-job families on home-school relations. However, some problems and possible adjustments/solutions can be implied from the literature.

The biggest problem is obviously the lack of time available to these parents and the conflicts experienced as a result.* Some working mothers we have interviewed recently have told us that they feel they "are missing out" and "don't really know as much as they would like to know about their child's

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*How much less time depends upon many factors: how much they work, how far away they work, their work schedules, the degree of complexity of child care arrangements, etc.

experiences at school." And even though they are unable to participate in many school events, they would like to "feel more involved" in the school, "in making the school work." As with responsibility for child care in general, it is probable that many two-job families still view the relationship with the school as the business of the mother. It will be interesting to see if the changing attitudes toward roles in two-job families extend to contacts with the child's school.

Understanding the feelings and pressures of the two-job family should make it possible for schools and parents to develop new mechanisms for relating to each other. Some of the ideas suggested for single-parent families would also apply to two-job families, e.g., workshops for teachers on the needs of these families, and conferences and office hours held at night. However, it appears that the greatest challenge will be to find new and creative ways for the parents of two-job families to be able to contribute, to feel invovled, in their child's school, in spite of the severe limitations on their time. This is an especially vital concern with the knowledge that commitment to the work world by both mothers and fathers is expected to be increasingly characteristic of most families.

Regional Parenting Surveys Data

Among the families represented in the Regional Parenting Surveys (Base Sample Survey), there was great variation in the number of adult members working outside the home and the degree of commitment to work. Slightly less than one-half (1/2) of all the families could be described as traditional (the husband working outside the home and the wife working inside the home). In some families, one adult worked full-time in the paid labor force and one

worked part-time. In others, both parents worked part-time. In still others, two parents both worked full-time outside the home. And in some families, no adult was working.*

In order to study the characteristic responses of two-job families, it was decided to use the most stringent measure available, that of two parents working full-time in the paid work force. A rationale for the measure is provided by Masnick and Bane (1980) who use full-time work as one characteristic of high attachment to work. They say, "Women who are strongly attached to work differ both from women who do not work outside the home and from women whose work attachments are weak. They spend their time differently and their families function in different ways" (Masnick and Bane, 1980, p. 63).

Within the parenting survey sample of 1,113 respondents, 247 of two-job (both full-time) families were represented. The responses of members of these two-job families were compared with all other families (866). As with the other special need families, there was also an attempt to view responses by both SES and by job status. However, only 25 of the two-job (full-time) families could be classified as low SES. Therefore, while some of these results will be reported, they should be viewed with caution.

Parenting Situation

Background characteristics. There was virtually no difference in the percent of two-job families living in rural counties versus urban counties compared to all other families. The two groups were also almost identical in racial composition (white, 92%; black, 8%). Two-job family respondents were somewhat better educated than other respondents. They were also slightly

*Single-parent families are not considered in this section.

more likely to be planning to return to school. When the two-job respondents were divided by SES level, it was clear that the high SES respondents were the ones most likely to be planning a return to school.

Percent of Respondents Who Plan to Return to School

Low SES		High SES	
Two-Job	All Others	Two-Job	All Others
16%	20%	34%	31%

Preparation for parenthood. Over two-thirds (2/3) of the two-job families and all other families said that they had been unprepared to become parents. The great majority of both (two-job, 86%; all others, 79%) did want to pass on something to their children, to help prepare them to become parents.

The sharing of responsibility. Most respondents in both groups (two-job, 88%; all others, 83%) said that they shared responsibility for the child with one or more adults (other than spouse). By SES and job status, those most likely to share responsibility were the low SES, two-job parents (96%). The most frequently named person with whom responsibility was shared was a "maternal grandparent" (two-job, 49%; all others, 52%).

Formal Contacts

Contacts with teachers. There was no difference found between two-job family respondents and all other respondents in the frequency of talks with their child's teacher (often or fairly often: two-job, 73%; all others, 72%); attitudes toward parent-teacher talks (very or somewhat helpful: two-job, 92%; all others, 93%); and the opinion that parent-teacher talks could be improved (two-job, 49%; all others, 43%).

Job status viewed within socioeconomic levels points out the strong relationship of SES and frequency of talks with teachers.

Percent Who Talk Often or Fairly Often with Teachers

Low SES		High SES	
Two-Job	All Others	Two-Job	All Others
56%	54%	75%	80%

Contacts with doctors. Likewise, there was no difference found between two-job families and all others in frequency of talks with doctors (often or fairly often: two-job, 72%; all others, 68%); attitudes toward parent-doctor talks (very or somewhat helpful: two-job, 93%; all others, 92%); and in the opinion that such talks could be improved (two-job, 41%; all others, 40%). Once again, frequent talks with doctors were closely related to high SES.

Organizational membership. One of the few ways that two-job families were distinguished from all others was in being significantly more likely to belong to community organizations. This was also true of membership in just those organizations that provide help and advice on child rearing.

Membership in One or More Community Organizations

Two-Job Families	All Others
83%	65%

Membership in Organizations That Help with Child Rearing

Two-Job Families	All Others
52%	39%

Higher organizational membership for two-family respondents holds within high and low SES levels, with high SES two-job families most likely to be members.

Membership in One or More Community Organizations

Low SES		High SES	
Two-Job	All Others	Two-Job	All Others
52%	40%	86%	72%

Awareness of local programs and services. Two-job family respondents were similar to all others in degrees of awareness of local programs and services. The program categories were: preparation for parenthood (two-job, 27%; all others, 30%); training for more effective parenthood (two-job, 10%; all others, 12%); opportunities for parents to fulfill own needs (two-job, 24%; all others, 27%); and help to families in difficult situations (two-job, 54%; all others, 57%). Viewed by SES and job status, high SES respondents in both groups were more aware of programs and services available.

Informal Contacts

Contacts with other parents. Two-job family respondents were very much like all other respondents in frequency of talks with other parents (talk often: two-job, 51%; all others, 44%), and positive attitudes toward talks with other parents (two-job, 89%; all others, 84%). The two groups also agreed that the greatest benefit of these talks is "the chance to share/compare" (two-job, 61%; all others, 57%).

Availability of a confidant. The majority of both groups said they had a confidant, a favorite person to discuss the sample child with (two-job, 77%; all others, 73%). For both groups, the confidant was most likely to be (a) a relative other than child's grandparent, (b) a friend/neighbor, or (c) a maternal grandparent.

Media Contacts

Two-job family respondents were significantly more likely than other respondents to have recently read something about child rearing in a magazine or in a newspaper.*

*These differences did not appear when asked about reading books or pamphlets/newsletters.

Had Recently Read About Child Rearing

	Two-Job	All Others
In a magazine	53%	39%
In a newspaper	32%	24%

Examining this response by SES and job status showed that those most likely to have read about child rearing were the high SES, two-job group. Within each socioeconomic level, two-job respondents were more likely than others to have read about child rearing.

Had Recently Read About Child Rearing

	Low SES		High SES	
	Two-Job	All Others	Two-Job	All Others
In a magazine	36%	18%	55%	45%
In a newspaper	16%	11%	34%	28%

Parental Attitudes and Needs

Attitudes. Two-job respondents and all other respondents tended to agree that "most parents today need some kind of help in rearing their children" (two-job, 80%; all others, 77%). Their most frequently mentioned source of advice and help was "own parents or in-laws."

Aspirations. Educational aspirations held for children were similar for two-job and all other respondents.

Educational Aspirations for Children

	Two-Job	All Others
College or more	53%	52%
High school	14%	19%
As far as child wants	29%	24%

The two groups were also in agreement regarding the influences expected to have the greatest impact on their child's future. Highest mentions were: respondent (two-job, 79%; all others, 74%); spouse (two-job, 78%; all others, 67%); and school (two-job, 69%; all others, 67%).

Viewed by SES and job status, members of the two high SES subgroups were more likely than others to see themselves as having "a great deal" of influence on their child's future. High SES, two-job respondents were most likely (82%) to perceive themselves as influential.

Respondents Who Rate Themselves as Having "A Great Deal" of Influence on Child's Future

Low SES		High SES	
Two-Job	All Others	Two-Job	All Others
56%	68%	82%	77%

Perceived needs. No differences were found in responses to those questions designed to measure perceived needs. From one-fifth (1/5) to one-fourth (1/4) said they had "special problems as a parent," "unanswered questions about parenting," and that "needed help for parents was not available locally."

Exploratory School Interviews

In four of the schools visited, two-job families were common among the school population. The estimates ranged from 50 to over 90 percent. However, in the two most rural schools, the number of two-job families was small. Many of these families lived on farms. Both parents were involved in the farm work and, in addition, the husband usually had a job in a plant.*

*Probably the time constraints on these women are as great as for women working outside the home, for they do farm work as well as housework and care of children. However, their work is home-based and they are not a part of the paid labor force.

The main problem for the schools is that of getting in touch with the two-job family. The parents often work a distance away, which means a toll call is involved. Emergency contacts are requested but are not always satisfactory. There was a recognition on the part of school staffs that it is difficult for parents of two-job families to be actively involved in the school. They have little time and energy after the demands of the job and the home are taken care of. However, we were also told that this does not mean that two-job families are not interested. Some make a great effort to participate and others do not. One principal told us that it is a matter of "priority" for many. (These schools do accommodate working parents in some ways. For example, parent-teacher conferences are scheduled up to 6:00 in the evening.) Homeroom mothers told us that working mothers on their lists respond positively to their calls. They usually want to contribute in some way, even though they cannot often be present during the day for special events.

For many schools, this type of family is fast becoming the norm. As a group, they don't appear to have pressing needs. It may be that both the schools and the working parents view the time constraint problem as something they can do little about.

Summary and Discussion

As a group, the two-job family was the least distinctive of all the special need families studied. Their attitudes and experiences, as reflected in responses to the Regional Parenting Surveys, were not very different from the responses of the total sample. The only ways in which the two-job families differed from all others were the following:

- higher degree of membership in community organizations, including organizations that provide help with child rearing; and

- more likely to have recently read about child rearing in a magazine or newspaper.

As in the other analyses, the strength of SES as a differentiating variable was revealed. High SES, two-job families were more likely than low SES, two-job families to have had frequent talks with teachers and doctors (regarding child), to belong to community organizations, to be aware of local programs and services, and to have recently read about child rearing.

We also found that school staffs had relatively little to say about the needs or problems of two-job families. The relationship between the school and two-job families may be a case of both school and parents accepting what is, rather than searching for new ways to make the relationship stronger. The schools do not expect a high level of involvement from these parents and the parents do not expect the schools can do anything to make their involvement more possible.

Much more needs to be known about two-job families in relationship to the schools. Two suggestions are proposed. Families with different degrees of commitment to the paid labor force (two-job families in which both work full-time, two-job families in which only one works full-time, and one-job families) could be compared. And two-job families known to be active in the schools versus two-job families who are not active could be investigated.

#4. FAMILIES WITH CHRONICALLY ILL OR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Pertinent Literature

There have always been families with handicapped children. But until the middle of this century, there were few facilities or services for such children. "Parents had nearly total responsibility for care of their handicapped children at home" (Berger, 1981). The general attitude was that these children could not learn, could never be independent or productive, indeed, that there was no hope for them. Thus, it is not surprising that these families were often depressed or ashamed and tended to isolate the child, not only from the community but sometimes from the rest of the family. This attitude has changed in recent decades due to a number of converging factors: the rehabilitation of injured World War II veterans, immigration in the 30's and 40's of some European educators interested in the education of the handicapped, a few influential families who had the experience of a handicapped child and talked publicly about it (Pearl Buck, the Kennedys, the Humphreys), and the development of organized interest groups such as the National Association for Retarded Citizens and the Council for Exceptional Children. In fact, special education has been called a twentieth century social movement. The philosophy of the movement has been that handicapped children can learn, that they are entitled to the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential, and that isolation and total dependency are unfair, unnecessary, and costly.

During the 1960's, organized parent groups began pressing for educational programs for their children. A series of favorable developments (a court decision in Pennsylvania, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Buckley Amendment) culminated in "the most far reaching and revolutionary legislation in relation to education, Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975" (Berger, 1981, p. 277). The act says that all persons between

ages 3-21 should be provided free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. The law requires diagnosis and individualization of educational programs. Parent involvement is mandated. Parents must be included as members of advisory committees. And they must participate with the school staff in the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for their child. If parents don't agree with school staff on an appropriate plan, they have the right to ask for changes, or even go to court. In addition, schools are expected to look for children entitled to special educational services and to inform parents of their rights (Kroth, 1978, pp. 7-8).

According to recent statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 1980), almost four million children (or about 8 percent of the total school-age population) in the country were receiving special education and related services. The three most numerous types of handicaps served were: speech impaired (30.8% of total served), learning disabled (29.3%), and mentally retarded (23.2%). Others served were the emotionally disturbed, other health impaired, orthopedically impaired, multi-handicapped, the deaf, the hard of hearing, the visually handicapped, and the deaf-blind. However, according to the head of the Federal Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, it is estimated that 10 to 12 percent (five to six million) of the school-age population should be receiving special educational services. One of the biggest problems holding back the system is money. Another factor is that some children seem to fall through the cracks. The director of the Children's Legal Defense Fund has said, "Taking advantage of PL 94-142 is a process. If there is no adult to trigger the process, it won't happen" (Options in Education, 1979, 1981). Children who are living in nursing homes, who have surrogate parents or guardians, who have been abandoned, may lose out or be kept waiting for their educational services.

There is no doubt that the enactment of PL 94-142 necessitated many adjustments and changes on the part of the schools. The experience of the years since enactment of the law has revealed numerous problems and obstacles to full implementation. Some of these are discussed below.

Parents

(1) In order to work as intended, parents and school staff must feel free to discuss, question, and disagree. However, some parents are not comfortable in such a role. They are afraid, hesitant about questioning authorities. They often fear that such an action will be taken out on the child later on. Yet these parents may feel frustrated, wanting more for their children than they are getting. Minority and low-income parents are most likely to have these kinds of feelings (Marion, 1979).

(2) Some parents ask for too much for their child, make unreasonable demands.

(3) Some parents do not show up for the conferences. Communication with them is not good and it is difficult to help them understand the process and the importance of their participation.

(4) Some parents who were active earlier in bringing about pressure for the passage of the law then took the attitude that the school system should take over, that they no longer needed to be involved (Staniszewski, 1981).

Teachers

(1) Sharing power with parents is threatening to some special education teachers.

(2) Some professionals communicate by words or tones that they know best; parents in these situations feel inadequate, guilty.

(3) Children may not be referred for evaluation if services are not available. Teachers have sometimes been asked not to find other children after the beginning of the year. Thus, limits may be placed on the teacher by the school system.

(4) There is often a time problem for special education teachers. They need time for testing, for arranging IEP conferences. Finding a date and time that is convenient for parents and other school staff is not always easy, and the teacher has only so much time after his/her teaching duties (Options in Education, 1979, 1981).

The School System

(1) The IEP may be tailored to fit the needs of the school and the services/programs currently available. (The law, however, requires that the child's need be documented regardless of availability of services.)

(2) As the law stipulates that the child shall receive education in "the least restrictive environment," this means that most special education students spend at least part of their day in a regular classroom. Thus, the most urgent need, according to Gallagher, former director of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, was and is "in-service training for regular teachers not trained in special education" (Options in Education, 1979, 1981). He sees this as a tremendous challenge, one not likely to be met for a number of years.

(3) More tests need to be developed to identify specific causes and indicate solutions for handicaps.

(4) Money is needed to pay for services and equipment related to special education (physical and occupational therapy, renovation of building facilities to accommodate the handicapped, etc.). Congress has provided for a small part of the extra cost of educating the handicapped. For this reason, state and local educators have lobbied in Washington and there has been great concern over budget cuts.

Out of all these experiences and problems, it appears that the most crucial factor in order to make the law work for the best interest of the children is for parents and school people to be able to work together, to have the freedom to be honest and open, to view each other as partners and as team members, rather than adversaries. It has been suggested that both groups need to be educated to work together. Why has working together been difficult? Why has parents' involvement in special education not been more successful? What are the barriers, the obstacles? Shirley Scritchfield from the University of Nebraska has studied the situation in Nebraska intensely and has come up with an interesting theory (Scritchfield, 1981). Her conclusion is that it is not the individual attitudes of school staff or parents but the structure of the situation which causes the difficulty. She reasons that being a member of a team implies equality among team members. However, in this case, parents are

inherently structural unequals with professionals. Parents are extremely dependent upon professionals for obtaining services for their children in whom they are highly invested. Professionals are not dependent on particular parents in the same way. Therefore, there is an unbalanced relationship with professionals holding a lot of potential power. There is also the fact that professionals, as part of their socialization into becoming professionals, are imbued with the idea of professional authority accompanied by a definition of the client as lacking in knowledge and understanding. Scritchfield believes that parents need to come to the team with more equal status if their information and opinions are to be viewed as important. Scritchfield believes parents can increase their power if they are part of a coalition, if they don't have to interact with professionals as isolated invididuals. In Nebraska parent advocacy groups are working with and training parents to interact with school administrators, physicians, etc. They are acting as ombudsmen and having a great impact.

Program Suggestions

Many of the programs suggested or in operation for the parents of handicapped children are similar to those for all parents, e.g., newsletters with tips and information, letters, suggested ways parents can reinforce what has been learned at school, parent volunteers, group meetings (speeches and/or discussions), and lending libraries (Kelly, 1974; Kroth, 1975).

However, the literature reveals that these parents do have special needs which should be taken into consideration in any contacts, communication, program, and planning. In spite of the sweeping change in attitudes and treatment of handicapped persons in this country, the parents of these children still do not find the fact of their child's handicap easy to accept. They

are often frustrated, fearful, despairing, and guilt-ridden. It is believed that these parents often go through certain stages or steps before acceptance of the situation is accomplished (Chinn, Winn, and Walters, 1978). "When parents are confronted with the task of rearing an exceptional child, they need both emotional support and specific information"(Berger, 1981, p. 294). The parents of a severely handicapped child need some relief, an occasional break, from the constant care they must provide. And it must also be realized that parents of a handicapped child may not find it easy to leave the home when the child is there. Flexibility and planning ahead are necessary if the teacher wants these parents to come to an individual or group meeting.

There have been some innovative programs developed especially for parents of handicapped children. Some examples are a parent outreach program in which parents of handicapped persons provide support, assistance, and information on a one-to-one basis to new parents of handicapped children (Spriggs and Mays, 1980); and a class for fathers which offers a support group, opportunities for father-child interaction, child-rearing information and awareness of community resources (Delaney, 1980). Undoubtedly, more creative programs designed to promote good relations between schools and the parents of special children will be developed.

Regional Parenting Surveys Data

Within the Regional Parenting Surveys were a number of questions having to do with health and medical contacts. One question asked whether or not the sample child had experienced particular kinds of health/development problems during her/his life. Two of these were "chronic or continuing problem(s) which limit his/her participation in activities" and "a physical or mental

handicap." Parents who replied "yes" to either of these experiences make up our subsample of "families of chronically ill or handicapped children." Out of the total sample of 1,113, 185 parents are in the subsample. Responses of the subsample were first compared with the responses of all other respondents. These two groups were each subdivided into high and low socioeconomic levels* and responses of the four subgroups were compared. Among the "families with chronically ill or handicapped children," 148 were high socioeconomic status and 37 were low socioeconomic status. Among all other respondents, 728 were high socioeconomic status and 200 were low.

Parenting Situation

Background and characteristics. Little or no difference was found in rural versus urban residency, family type, race, educational level, or respondents' plans to return to school between the parents of handicapped children and the parents of non-handicapped children. There were some differences when socioeconomic status was also introduced. For both groups, plans to return to school were associated with high socioeconomic level. And being a member of a minority was related to low socioeconomic level for both groups, although it was especially pronounced for the low SES handicapped subgroup.

Preparation for parenthood. Approximately two-thirds (2/3) of both the parents of handicapped children and the parents of non-handicapped children felt they had not been prepared when they became parents. Most (handicapped, 85%; non-handicapped, 80%) wanted to pass on advice and information to their children to help them become good parents. The most important advice mentioned by both groups was (a) be ready, not too young; (b) be patient and understanding; and (c) have love and the ability to express love.

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*The measure used to determine high or low socioeconomic level was described earlier. See page 6.

Present parenting situation. Parents were asked if there were anyone else (beside spouse) with whom they shared responsibility for the sample child. There was little difference in the comparison of the two groups: 88 percent of the parents of handicapped children and 84 percent of the parents of non-handicapped children replied that they shared the responsibility with one or more others. However, when viewed within socioeconomic level, the high SES handicapped parents were most likely to share responsibility (91%) while the low SES handicapped parents were least likely to do so.

Parents Who Share Responsibility for Child with One or More Others

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped	76%	91%
Parents of Non-handicapped	80%	85%

Persons most frequently named by both groups as the ones with whom responsibility was shared were, in rank order, (1) a maternal grandparent, (2) a relative other than child's grandparent, (3) child's older sibling, (4) friend/neighbor, and (5) paternal grandparent. Less frequently named were workers in an organization with which the child was associated; however, these persons were more frequently named by parents of handicapped children (15%) than by the other parents (9%). There were some differences when socioeconomic level and handicap conditions were considered together. The two low SES subgroups were more likely to name child's older sibling; this was especially true within the low SES handicapped subgroups. Both high SES subgroups more frequently named a maternal grandparent or a friend/neighbor than did the low SES subgroups. Workers in the child's organization was highest for the high SES handicapped subgroup.

Formal Contacts

Contacts with teachers. There was little difference found between parents of handicapped children and parents of non-handicapped children in regard to contacts with teachers. The majority of both groups had talked often or fairly often with teachers (handicapped, 76%; non-handicapped, 71%), and many had found their talks "very helpful" (handicapped, 62%; non-handicapped, 58%). Slightly less than one-half (1/2) of both groups believed these talks could be more helpful (handicapped, 48%; non-handicapped, 43%). When viewed by socio-economic level and handicap condition, the two high SES subgroups had talked with teachers more frequently than had the low SES subgroups. This type of differentiation did not occur for attitudes toward talks of their improvement.

Frequency of Parent Talks with Teachers

	Low SES		High SES	
	Parents of Handicapped	Parents of Non-handicapped	Parents of Handicapped	Parents of Non-handicapped
Talked Often or Fairly Often	59%	58%	84%	78%

Contacts with doctors. Parents of chronically ill or handicapped children had had more frequent talks with doctors (concerning child) during the past year than had parents of non-handicapped children. This relationship held within socioeconomic level, although it was the high SES handicapped subgroup who had had the most talks.

Frequency of Parent Talks with Doctors

	Parents of Handicapped	Parents of Non-handicapped
No Talks	13%	31%
1 to 3 Talks	45%	52%
4 or More Talks	39%	14%

Frequency of Parent Talks with Doctors by SES

	Low SES		High SES	
	Parents of Handicapped	Parents of Non-Handicapped	Parents of Handicapped	Parents of Non-Handicapped
No Talks	19%	43%	11%	28%
1 to 3 Talks	62%	45%	41%	54%
4 or more Talks	16%	8%	44%	15%

Parents' attitudes were generally positive for both groups (very helpful: handicapped, 65%; non-handicapped, 63%). Approximately 40 percent of each group believed that parent-doctor talks could be improved.

Organizational memberships. Parents of handicapped children did not differ from parents of non-handicapped children in their tendency to belong to community organizations; 70 percent of the parents of handicapped children and 68 percent of the parents of non-handicapped children belonged to one or more community organizations. Degree of attendance at organizational meetings was also similar. Of just those who belonged to organizations, 63 percent of the parents of handicapped children and 58 percent of the parents of non-handicapped children belonged to an organization that offered help and advice on child rearing. The specific organization of this type most frequently mentioned was the PTA or PTO. The two most highly rated benefits of belonging to this type of organization were the opportunities to "find out what our children are doing" and "to discuss and compare with others." Viewed by socioeconomic level, it is obvious that both high SES subgroups are associated with higher membership in general and higher membership in organizations that help parents.

Membership in One or More Community Organizations

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped Children	43%	77%
Parents of Non-handicapped Children	41%	76%

Membership in Organizations That Provide Help to Parents

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped Children	19%	54%
Parents of Non-handicapped Children	23%	46%

Awareness of programs and services. There was little difference in awareness of local programs and services between the parents of handicapped children and the parents of non-handicapped children. Most parents were unaware except of the programs for families facing difficult situations. The results for the four program types are: preparation for parenthood (handicapped, 29%; non-handicapped 35%); training for more effective parenting (handicapped, 14%; non-handicapped, 12%); programs to fulfill parents' own needs (handicapped, 29%; non-handicapped, 26%); and programs for families facing difficult situations (handicapped, 61%; non-handicapped, 55%). By SES level, high SES parents in both groups were more likely to be aware of the four types of programs than were the low SES subgroups.

Informal Contacts

Contacts with other parents. Parents of handicapped children talked to other parents as frequently as did the parents of non-handicapped children (often or fairly often: handicapped, 77%; non-handicapped, 78%). The great majority of both groups said their talks with other parents were very helpful. However, when also viewed with SES, it was discovered that the low SES subgroups talked less often and that the low SES handicapped subgroup talked least often.

Parents Who Talked Often or Fairly Often with Other Parents

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped Children	49%	84%
Parents of Non-handicapped Children	67%	81%

Availability of a confidant. Both groups of parents were equally likely to say they had a confidant, a favorite person with whom to discuss the child or child rearing in general (handicapped, 77%; non-handicapped, 74%). These confidants were most likely to be (a) a relative other than the child's grandparent, (b) a friend/neighbor, or (c) a maternal grandparent. However, when these responses were examined by both handicap condition and SES, it was discovered that the high SES subgroup was more likely than the low SES subgroup to have confidants.

Availability of a Confidant

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped Children	62%	80%
Parents of Non-handicapped Children	66%	76%

Media Contacts

Overall, there was little difference in the percent of parents in both groups who had recently read about child rearing in a magazine (handicapped, 48%; non-handicapped, 41%); in a book (handicapped, 32%; non-handicapped, 25%); in a newspaper (both, 26%); or in a pamphlet/newsletter (handicapped, 22%; non-handicapped, 17%). However, high SES parents (handicapped and non-handicapped) were found to have used all types of reading materials more frequently than had the low SES (handicapped and non-handicapped) parents.

Parental Attitudes and Needs

Attitudes. The majority of parents in both groups agreed that "most parents today need some kind of help in raising their children" (handicapped, 83%; non-handicapped, 77%). The specific source of advice and help most frequently named by both groups was "own parents/in-laws." However, within

socioeconomic levels, the high SES subgroups were most prone to say that parents need help. This was especially true of the high SES handicapped subgroup.

Agree That All Parents Today Need Help

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped Children	70%	86%
Parents of Non-handicapped children	73%	78%

Aspirations. Educational aspirations for the child were similar for the parents of handicapped children and parents of non-handicapped children.

Educational Aspirations for Children

	Parents of Handicapped Children	Parents of Non-Handicapped Children
High School	14%	19%
College or Beyond	56%	52%
As Far As Child Can	23%	25%
Vocational	7%	3%

These results generally held within high and low socioeconomic levels with the exception that the low SES non-handicapped subgroup had somewhat lower aspirations (college, 43%).

Both the parents of handicapped children and the parents of non-handicapped children consider the greatest influences on their child's future to be: themselves (handicapped, 68%; non-handicapped, 77%; their spouse (handicapped, 63%; non-handicapped, 71%); and the school (handicapped, 65%; non-handicapped, 68%). When viewed by SES and handicap condition, a few differences emerge. The high SES non-handicap subgroup rated their (the respondent's) influence higher (80%) than did any of the other subgroups. And the influence of the spouse was found

to be much lower (49%) for the low SES handicapped subgroup than for the other subgroups.

Perceived needs. The three questions concerning perceived needs of parents provided interesting results which varied depending upon whether one or two variables were being held constant.

(1) Parents of handicapped children were more likely (32%) than parents of non-handicapped children (20%) to feel they have "special problems" as parents. This relationship remained within the socioeconomic levels.

Yes Responses to "Do You Feel You have Special Problems as a Parent?"

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped Children	35%	32%
Parents of Non-handicapped Children	17%	21%

(2) Parents of handicapped children were somewhat more likely (30%) than parents of non-handicapped children (23%) to say they had "unanswered questions" about child rearing. However, in this case, further division by SES revealed that the high SES subgroups (handicapped and non-handicapped) were more likely than the low SES subgroups to have unanswered questions. The parents most likely to have questions were in the high SES handicapped subgroup.

Yes Responses to "Do You Have Any Unanswered Questions?"

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped Children	16%	32%
Parents of Non-handicapped Children	13%	23%

(3) When asked whether there were needed types of help for parents which were not available locally, parents of handicapped children were only slightly more likely (27%) than parents of non-handicapped children (22%) to agree. Once again, the strength of the SES variable is clear. In this case, SES level differentiated the responses of the parents of handicapped children much more than the responses of the parents of non-handicapped children.

Yes Responses to "Are There Any Needed Types of Help for Parents Which are Not Available Locally?"

	Low SES	High SES
Parents of Handicapped Children	8%	32%
Parents of Non-handicapped Children	19%	23%

Exploratory School Interviews

In all six of the schools visited, children with learning disabilities or handicaps were recognized as a numerically small but significant proportion of the school population. County staff persons estimate that county-wide, all exceptionalities make up about 10-12 percent of the school population. Home-bound teachers are provided for students who are ill for any period of time. Children with special learning problems spend varying amounts of time in special education classrooms, regular classrooms, and, in some cases, with individual tutors. We were told that there is a county organization for the parents of exceptional children.

During the interviews with school staffs, several problems related to working with "families of handicapped children" emerged. One principal believes that parents of children with learning disabilities do not take this fact seriously enough. A junior high counselor said that parents of exceptional children often have expectations for their children's performance, both in school and later on, that are too high, not realistic. Some school counselors reported that parents sometimes resist placement of their children in special education classes and that some students who do not need special education try to get into these classes in order to work less. And a special education high school teacher told us of her difficulty getting parents to come in once a year for the IEP. Approximately 50 percent actively came in for the conference. Most of the others are contacted by phone. A few do not respond in

any way. She feels that the reasonsin these cases are cultural differences. These are the families with an educable handicapped child who are living under very deprived conditions in rural hollows. The learning disabled students tend to come from middle-class homes; the educable handicapped are more likely to come from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Summary and Discussion

In the Regional Parenting Surveys, parents of chronically ill or handicapped children were found to be significantly different from all other parents in the following ways:

- more frequent talks with doctors (about child) within the past year, and
- greater tendency to perceive themselves as having "special problems" as a parent.

The parents of handicapped children and the parents of non-handicapped children were similar in:

- frequency of contacts with teachers,
- membership in community organizations,
- awareness of local programs/services,
- use of reading materials as a source of help in child rearing,
- frequency of talks with other parents,
- availability of a confidant, and
- aspirations held for children.

When the two groups of parents were further subdivided by low and high socioeconomic status, some responses were found to be more closely related to high SES than to the child's handicap or lack of handicap. These were:

- frequent talks with teachers,
- membership in community organizations,

- having unanswered questions about child rearing,
- awareness of local programs and services, and
- having recently read something about child rearing.

It was also discovered that, for a number of responses, the greatest differences among the four subgroups were between the two handicap subgroups. The high SES handicapped parents were most likely and the low SES handicapped parents were least likely to:

- share responsibility for the child,
- belong to an organization that provides help for parents,
- talk often or fairly often with other parents,
- have a confidant to discuss the child,
- agree that all parents need help, and
- say that some needed help for parents is not available locally.

Thus, it appears that in their relationships with the parents of handicapped children, school people need to consider the different circumstances, life styles, and needs found within this group. The school-based interviews provide some clues to the different kinds of problems experienced in contacts between schools and the families with handicapped children. It was difficult to get low-income parents to come in, to participate at all in their child's education. Other parents not only come in, but may resent the child's placement or expect more than the school believes is realistic.

#5. ISOLATED RURAL FAMILIES

Pertinent Literature

Historical Background

This discussion of isolated rural families draws on the literature of Appalachia. Both the physical terrain and the history of the development of a unique subculture in rural Appalachia have led to the greater possibility of isolated rural families in this area than in other parts of the country. Most of the families and children we are concerned with today in Appalachia have their roots in the Appalachian subculture sometimes referred to as folk culture or mountain culture. In order to understand what is happening today, it is important to know something about the development of this subculture, what its major characteristics were, and how it has been affected by social change impinging from outside.

The earliest settlers came into the southern Appalachian Region at the end of the 18th century. Migration continued at a slow pace until the mid-19th century. From then until the early 20th century, the offspring of the settlers lived in the Appalachian mountain hollows, virtually isolated from the rest of the country where industrialization and increased communications were bringing rapid changes (Erikson, 1976, pp. 51-78). Doubtless, the rural isolated life was chosen by many of the first settlers because it gave them the freedom to live according to the values important to them. But with long years of almost no contact with the outside world, these early preferences developed into a unique way of life. Survival was by means of farming and hunting. Self-sufficiency, closeness to nature, and freedom were all highly valued. Appalachian settlers were action-oriented; they disliked routine and planning.

They were person-oriented rather than goal-oriented. Extensive personal interaction resulted in a great deal of social cohesiveness within the isolated communities. Other traits usually mentioned in the conventional portrait of Appalachian subculture are those believed to have developed from the hardness and disappointments of their lives. These include fatalism or the attitude of passive resignation, otherworldliness (looking for rewards in the next world), and a continuing sense of fearfulness and anxiety (Weller, 1965, pp. 28-57; Erikson, 1976, pp. 73-75).

The family was tremendously important as it was the only institution in the early days of settlement. The family took care of all the individual's needs. Work, education, care of the sick, recreation, and religion were all functions originally carried out within the family.

The importance of religion in Appalachia has often been noted. However, although early Appalachians were very concerned about religion and spent much time discussing it, religion was viewed more as a personal experience than an experience related to formal membership in an organization. The early settlers came from a variety of backgrounds (Scotch-Irish, Celtic) and a variety of religious traditions, but many of them were nonconformists. Religion revivals, characterized by emotional excitement and action, have been popular in Appalachia since the late 1800's. But the establishment of stable church congregations was difficult. The Baptist and Methodist churches have had the greatest success in the area (Weller, 1965, pp. 121-133).

The early settlers did not consider formal education necessary for their way of life. In fact, it was believed that too much schooling was dangerous, in that it would make their children unfit for mountain life (Weller, 1965, pp. 107-113; Erikson, 1976, pp. 63-64), for the school did not deal with

practical matters upon which the Appalachian depended for survival. Therefore, even after schools were established and attendance required, there was resistance to education. Children were frequently taken out of school in order to help with the work at home. School was considered more appropriate for girls than for boys. The peer group exerted pressures on boys not to succeed in school.

Early Changes

As the Appalachian settlers did not know about fertilization or crop rotation, their soil became more and more exhausted. Large families which were the norm meant that a family's land was divided into smaller and smaller sections or the entire family moved to more remote hollows. Supporting themselves became more difficult over time. At the end of the 19th century, outside lumber industries discovered the vast timber resources in Appalachia. Over a period of 50 years, most of the timber areas were depleted. In the second and third decades of the 20th century, coal companies began coming into the area. Appalachians sold mineral rights to the land on which they lived for next to nothing. The Appalachian people were exploited by these outside interests. Valuable resources were taken out; people had little to show for it. Their economic condition, in fact, took a downward trend. But in spite of these changes and the fact that many Appalachians worked for the coal companies, they tended to preserve their way of life, their attachment to place and family (Erikson, 1976, pp. 51-78).

Changes Since World War II

After World War II, it was no longer economically possible for rural Appalachians to live independently. The land could not support them and there were not enough jobs available locally. Appalachians began to be drawn to

cities where jobs were more plentiful. It was at this time that "members of the Appalachian communities began to shift their orientation to the larger society. The larger society became their model" (Photiadis, 1980, p. 5). Millions migrated to the cities of the north and east. The more skilled and those who had finished high school were the most successful in obtaining jobs and economic independence. However, these people remained attached to the land and kin of their roots. There was much movement back and forth for visits and important occasions. Information about life in other parts of the country was carried back by these migrants (Philliber and McCoy, 1981). During this period, the advent of television also became a powerful instrument for social change in the Region.

Appalachians were required to adjust to these changes, to compare and orient themselves in some way to the larger society. Most were able to make the adjustment, to identify with the larger society while retaining some of the unique heritage. However, a minority of families were not able to make the adjustment.

These were the families with fewer resources (economic, educational, emotional) who were not able to keep up with the changing situation, unable to successfully take care of their needs either by migrating or by remaining in Appalachia. These are described as "families in retreat"; families who adopted nonconventional means of adjustment by retreating into welfare, retreating into close involvement in a sectarian fundamentalist church, and into close involvement with a small cluster of other families in like circumstances (Photiadis, 1980, p. 5). They appeared not to want to change, to be uninterested in upward mobility (Weller, 1965, pp. 138-141). However, in fact, they had given up hope of a better life. They were afflicted with many problems. They

had many health problems, both physical and mental, and were often prone to alcoholism and drug addiction. At the present time, there are adults in the Region who grew up in such a family environment and are now perpetuating this style of life. Photiadis believes that the lifestyle of these families resembles that of "the culture of poverty" first described by Oscar Lewis (1965). Lewis defined "culture of poverty" as a design of living passed down from generation to generation, characterized by some 70 traits, including provincial perspective, unemployment, absence of savings, lack of privacy, frequent use of physical violence in child rearing, gregariousness, predisposition to authoritarianism, inability to defer gratification, fatalism, mistrust of government, strong feelings of powerlessness, marginality, and helplessness.

Rural Appalachian Families Today

Although a minority in numbers, the nonconventional families (the families in retreat previously described) can be found in neighborhoods or clusters in most parts of central Appalachia today. They have developed new group norms in accordance with their deviant lifestyle. By means of these new group norms, they are able to justify accepting welfare, exerting little effort to keep children in school, etc. Thus, these families have adopted a lifestyle which is not part of the original Appalachian culture (in some ways, it is the opposite of the original values) but which represents an adaptive response to a situation in which they are unable to achieve social status and self-esteem (Photiadis, 1980, pp. 9-12).

In contrast, most rural Appalachian families today can be described as conventional. They have retained at least a part of the indigenous culture but have also found a place in relation to the larger society. Of course, these families have adjusted to social change with varying degrees of success; there remain many economic needs in Appalachia today.

The most relevant point for our concern with school-family relations is that, at present, there is not one description which fits all rural Appalachian families. Instead, there are many different family situations, different subgroups of families within most Appalachian communities. Evidence of the original subculture can still be found, but with great variation. It is important to understand the complexity of the situation and the reasons behind the variations in lifestyles of rural Appalachian families.

Implications for Working with Rural Appalachian Families

Some understanding of the history and reasons for the diversity of families found in rural Appalachia today is the first requirement for working with these families. Working separately with some subgroups, at least in the beginning, has been suggested.

Several authors concerned about needs of Appalachia yet to be met have suggested that professionals (extension workers, teachers, etc.) draw on some traditional Appalachian practices in order to develop programs and get families interested and involved. Weller suggested reaching families individually, on a person-to-person basis rather than expecting participation in organized groups. He stressed the importance of providing motivation for learning by helping parents to see the need for encouraging their children in schools, and by providing new experiences for children such as trips outside their areas and exchange teachers from other parts of the country (Weller, 1965, pp. 94-160). He also suggested informality, patience, and an attitude of working with rather than "doing for or to."

Photiadis strongly urged the use of "personal interaction" as a technique. The worker would begin by setting up situations where people can interact with each other repeatedly on a community or sub-community level. The situation would revolve around a common need or concern. Information could be

exchanged or released informally in such a setting. Out of such repeated personal interactions, new bonds would be established and new organizations gradually emerge. The participants would learn to work together to solve common problems, leaders would emerge, and new bases for self-esteem and achievement would be found (Photiadis, 1980, p. 16).

Attitudes have changed in Appalachia. One of the more crucial changes has been in the attitude toward education. Most rural Appalachians aspire to be like the rest of the country in terms of income and education. "As a matter of fact, they often see education as the only means for their children's success. Today rural Appalachians have more favorable attitudes toward education than urban people. This is especially true with low-income rural people" (Photiadis, 1980, p. 19).

Regional Parenting Surveys Data

In the Regional Parenting Surveys, counties were selected to be representative of urban, Appalachian rural, and non-Appalachian rural areas of five states. However, a range of living environments was possible within a given county. For example, some respondents in very rural counties lived in small towns or cities. And some respondents were found living in rural pockets which were, in terms of miles, very near an urban area. Thus, it should be kept in mind that within the broad labels such as "rural" and "urban," there is often much variation and overlap.

One of the groups we expected to find in Appalachia was one made up of physically isolated families. These families, isolated in the hollows of the mountains, have long been considered typically Appalachian, characterized by independence, close-knit family groups, suspicion of outsiders, and lives turned inward rather than open to change and new influences.

It was hypothesized that even with all the changes which have occurred in Appalachia in recent decades, there might still be some "isolated rural families" who could find it very difficult to relate to the staffs of schools, who might feel uncomfortable or ill at ease in the kind of formal events (PTA meetings, scheduled parent-teacher conferences) which often are the points of contact between schools and families.

It was decided to depend on our interviewers to determine (with the use of certain guidelines such as distance from a main road, distance from neighbors, conditions of roads, etc.) which of their interviews had been with an isolated rural parent. Since the interviewers were all local people, they were able to identify some isolated rural families before the interviews took place. However, some could only be identified after the experience of having traveled to these parents' homes. In many cases, there was little doubt in the interviwer's mind (e.g., those homes which could only be reached with a four-wheel drive vehicle, to which the last bit of distance had to be walked, etc.). In some cases, interviewers were uncertain. Only those families about which our interviewers were relatively sure in their judgment were included in the subsample. In this way, 73 respondents were identified as members of isolated rural families. The responses of these respondents were compared with the responses of all other parents in the sample. Then each group was further divided by high and low socioeconomic status and responses of the four subgroups were compared. There were 33 high SES isolated rural respondents and 40 low SES isolated rural respondents.

Parenting Situation

Background characteristics. As expected, most of the isolated rural respondents (71%) were from Appalachian rural counties; however, 22 percent

were from non-Appalachian rural counties, and 7 percent lived within counties designated as urban. Family types were similar for isolated rural families and all other families. However, among the isolated rural families, extended family types were slightly more likely.

Isolated rural respondents were significantly less likely to have achieved a high school education than were the other respondents.

Respondent's Level of Education

	Isolated Rural	All Others
Less than high school education	62%	26%
High school graduate	23%	44%
More than high school education	15%	30%

Isolated rural respondents were also less likely than other respondents to be planning to go back to school (isolated rural, 20%; all others, 30%). Only 13 percent of the low SES isolated rural respondents planned to do so. Participation in the paid labor force was very similar (isolated rural, 59%; all others, 56%). Only 3 percent of the isolated rural respondents were members of minorities, compared to 9 percent of all others. Isolated rural families were significantly more likely to have larger families (over four) than was true of all other families; this remained true within SES levels.

Present parenting situation. When asked whether they entrusted anyone else (besides self and spouse) with some responsibility for their child's care and upbringing, most agreed. However, isolated rural respondents were slightly less likely than other respondents to say that they did so (shared responsibility for child with one or more others: isolated rural, 70%; all others, 85%).

The most significant differences in the types of persons named were the greater tendency of the isolated rural parents to name the child's older

sibling (isolated rural, 49%; all others, 30%) and the lesser tendency of the isolated rural parents to name maternal grandparents (isolated rural, 33%; all others, 52%) or a friend/neighbor (isolated rural, 14%; all others, 28%). Within SES and isolated status, the low SES isolated parents were the least likely to share responsibility (67%).

Formal Contacts

Contacts with teachers. Inquiry into how frequently parents talked with their child's teacher in the past year revealed that the majority of both groups had talked either often or fairly often. However, isolated rural parents talked less frequently than other parents.

Frequency of Talks with Child's Teacher in Past Year

	Isolated Rural	All Others
Talked often or fairly often	58%	74%

Of those who had talked to the teachers, however, there was virtually no difference between the groups in the way they felt about the talks. Most said the talks were "very helpful" (isolated rural, 56%; all others, 58%) or "somewhat helpful" (isolated rural, 30%; all others, 34%). However, when asked whether their talks with teachers could be improved, both groups indicated that there was room for improvement, isolated rural, 48%; all others, 44%). More initiative by teachers/schools in providing opportunities for talks was suggested.

When viewed by SES and isolated status, it is seen that frequency of talks with teachers is more closely related to SES. However, low SES isolated parents had talked least often of all the subgroups.

Frequency of Talks with Child's Teacher in Past Year

	Low SES		High SES	
	Isolated Rural	All Others	Isolated Rural	All Others
Talked often or fairly often	45%	56%	73%	78%

Attitudes toward talks remained similar across the subgroups.

Contacts with doctors. Almost all parents in both groups had one or more medical contacts. The number of times parents had talked to a doctor (about sample child) within the past year was also similar for both groups. Slightly over one-half of both groups had talked to a doctor one to three times; slightly less than one-third had not talked to a doctor. Both groups tended to say these talks were helpful, but non-isolated respondents were somewhat more enthusiastic (very helpful: isolated rural, 51%; all others, 64%). Most parents in both groups indicated that their talks with doctors could be made more helpful. Only 36 percent of the isolated rural parents and 32 percent of the other parents believed these talks could not be improved.

These responses did not vary much when SES level was introduced. The low SES non-isolated subgroup was the least likely to have talked to a doctor.

Organizational membership. Isolated rural parents were significantly less likely to be members of one or more community organizations than were other parents.

Membership in Community Organizations

	Isolated Rural	All Others
Belonged to one or more organizations	37%	71%

Of just those who do belong to community organizations, slightly over one-half of both groups belonged to organizations that provide help with child rearing. PTA's or PTO's were most frequently named. The most important way that such

organizations were helpful to isolated rural parents was by providing an opportunity to "discuss/compare problems children are having" (isolated rural, 39%; all others, 22%). By SES and isolated status, it is the low SES isolated parents who are least likely to belong to community organizations in general or to organizations that provide help to parents.

Membership in One or More Community Organizations

	Low SES	High SES
Isolated Rural Parents	15%	63%
All Other Parents	47%	77%

Membership in Organizations That Provide Help to Parents

	Low SES	High SES
Isolated Rural Parents	10%	36%
All Other Parents	24%	48%

Awareness of programs and services. There was no difference between isolated rural parents and all other parents in awareness of local programs/services of four different types. Both groups were least aware of "programs to promote more effective parenting" (isolated rural, 14%; all others, 12%) and most aware of "programs for families facing difficult situations" (both, 56%). However, when the two groups are differentiated by SES, it is revealed that high SES is generally associated with greater awareness and that low SES isolated parents rank lowest in awareness of three program types.

Awareness of Local Programs/Services

	Low SES		High SES	
Programs that provide:	Isolated Rural	All Others	Isolated Rural	All Others
Preparation for parenthood	15%	25%	24%	31%
Help in difficult situations	38%	44%	64%	59%
For more effective parenting	8%	8%	3%	13%
For parents' own needs	3%	19%	21%	29%

Informal Contacts

Contacts with other parents. Although the majority of both groups were in the habit of talking with other parents about their children or child rearing, isolated rural parents were much less likely to do so than were other parents.

Frequency of Talks with Other Parents

	Isolated Rural	All Others
Talked often or fairly often	57%	79%

Both groups, however, were positive about their talks with other parents. The great majority said these talks were helpful (isolated rural, 75%; all others, 86%). The most important benefit for both groups was being able "to share/compare"; the second most important benefit was being able "to learn, get new ideas."

When the two groups are viewed within SES level, it becomes clear that the low SES isolated parents are least likely to talk to other parents about their children. The difference in the two high SES subgroups indicates that the isolated status has some independent effect.

Parents Who Talked Often or Fairly Often With Other Parents

	Low SES	High SES
Isolated Rural Parents	50%	66%
All Other Parents	66%	82%

Availability of a confidant. The majority of both the isolated rural parents and all other parents had a confidant, a close relative or friend with whom they liked to discuss the sample child. Isolated rural parents were only slightly less likely (64%) than other parents (75%) to have such a confidant. Those chosen as confidants by both groups were most frequently a relative other than the child's grandparents, a friend or neighbor, and a maternal grandparent. The introduction of the SES variable provided no new insights.

Media Contacts

An overall finding was that most parents do not often use reading as a source of advice and help in child rearing. In the comparison of isolated rural and all other parents, isolated rural parents were somewhat less likely, in most cases, to have read about child rearing. However, when viewed within SES levels, it is apparent that it is the low SES isolated subgroup which accounts for the difference. High SES is strongly associated with reading.

Percent Who Had Recently Read About Child Rearing

	Low SES		High SES	
	Isolated Rural	All Others	Isolated Rural	All Others
In a magazine	12.5%	22%	39%	48%
In a newspaper	5%	13%	21%	30%
In a book	12.5%	15%	36%	30%
In a pamphlet or newsletter	5%	8%	24%	21%

Parental Attitudes and Needs

Attitudes. In response to, "In today's world, all parents need some kind of help in raising their children," the majority of isolated rural parents (68%) and all other parents (78%) agreed. However, within socioeconomic levels, the low SES isolated rural parents were least likely to agree and the high SES non-isolated were most likely to agree.

Agree That All Parents Today Need Help

	Low SES	High SES
Isolated Rural Parents	65%	73%
All Other Parents	74%	79%

Both the isolated rural and all other parents agreed that the characteristics of an ideal parent were (a) has patience, understanding; (b) loves children; and (c) spends time with children.

Aspirations. What do parents hope for their child's future? Isolated rural parents held somewhat lower educational aspirations for their child than did other parents. However, the highest percent in both groups aspire to a college education.

How Far Would You Like Child To Go in School?

	Isolated Rural	All Others
High school graduate	36%	17%
College or more	44%	53%
As far as child can and wants	16%	25%
Vocational school	1%	4%

Looking at both groups within socioeconomic levels, the most common response of all subgroups remained "college or more." However, low SES isolated rural parents were more likely than any of the others to be satisfied with a high school education.

Personal qualities both groups desired for their children as adults were (a) caring, loving; (b) respectable/trustworthy; (c) own person; and (c) well liked.

Who or what do parents believe will have an impact on the way their child turns out as an adult? Isolated rural parents were very similar in their responses to those given by all other parents.

When the two groups were divided by socioeconomic level, most of the differences in responses appear to be due to SES. High SES parents attribute greater influence to themselves, to their spouses, and "to anything or anyone else"; low SES parents are more likely than high SES parents to attribute a great deal of influence to the government. Only the belief in the influence of the school appears unrelated to SES. In fact, it is of interest to note

that it is the low SES isolated parents who attribute more influence to the schools (78%) than do any of the other subgroups.

Who or What Will Influence Child's Future "A Great Deal"?

	Low SES		High SES	
	Isolated Rural	All Others	Isolated Rural	All Others
Respondent	70%	66%	79%	78%
Spouse	60%	59%	82%	72%
Schools	78%	68%	64%	67%
Government	28%	29%	21%	21%
Anything or Anyone Else	20%	26%	48%	40%

Perceived needs. In response to the three questions about perceived needs, isolated rural parents as a whole were somewhat less likely to perceive themselves as having "special problems as a parent" and somewhat less likely to have "unanswered questions" about parenting.

"Yes" Responses to Perceived Need Questions

	Isolated Rural	All Others
Do you feel you have special problems as a parent?	15%	23%
Do you have unanswered questions about parenting?	18%	24%
Is there any needed help for parents that is not available locally?	26%	23%

Viewed by isolated status and SES, greater differences are discovered. Low SES isolated parents are the least likely of the subgroups to say they have "special problems as a parent." "Having unanswered questions about parenting" is more characteristic of the two high SES subgroups and the high SES isolated parents stand out with the highest response to, "Is there needed help which is not available?".

"Yes" Responses to Perceived Need Questions

	Low SES		High SES	
	Isolated Rural	All Others	Isolated Rural	All Others
Do you have special problems as a parent?	13%	21%	18%	23%
Do you have unanswered questions about parenting?	8%	14%	30%	27%
Is there any needed help for parents that is not available locally?	18%	17%	36%	24%

Exploratory School Interviews

In all six schools visited, there were some families among their school populations who were recognized by the school staff as being "isolated rural families." These families were most prevalent in the two most rural schools.

The children from isolated rural families were bused in from clusters of populations in various hollows. Some elementary students had very long bus rides which meant they were away from home for as long as ten hours. There was some disagreement among school staffs in regard to transportation and isolated rural families. Some believe that transportation is a real problem for these families which makes it difficult for parents to come to school, for parents and children to obtain medical services, and for high school students to participate in extracurricular activities. Others believe that these isolated rural families almost always do have cars and that lack of participation in school activities is more a matter of choice than necessity.

Some drawbacks to parent participation in school affairs by isolated rural families were outlined for us by some very actively involved parents. These drawbacks were (a) the amount of farm work which has to be done, (b) the typical large families and the difficulty of getting babysitters, and (c) the

poor roads to homes which in bad weather make it uncertain that a parent will be able to follow through on a commitment at school.

A few of the isolated rural families were described as living in extreme poverty. They have poor housing, no running water, and sometimes not enough to eat. They may be on welfare or only marginally employed. These are the families most difficult for the school to communicate with. In one high school we were told that there are a few students who are all related and all from the same area who are in the habit of "enrolling in school each year, only to qualify for social security or welfare." They are only marginally involved in school, have poor attendance records, and tend to drop out as soon as possible.

There are different perspectives and questions about the meaning of "isolated rural families." One principal told us that he believes that only a few families are really physically isolated, even in the most rural areas. He believes that there are more families who are isolated socially due to different values, religions, or lifestyles. We were also told about some families who have chosen to move into geographically isolated areas in recent years. Even though their numbers are small, their backgrounds and values have resulted in their having greater involvement in the schools than do the long-time residents.

Summary and Discussion

The rural isolated sample from the Regional Parenting Surveys differed from all other parents in the survey in the following ways:

- larger family size;
- somewhat less likely to share responsibility for child with adults other than spouse;

- less likely to belong to community organizations (more true of low SES isolated than high SES isolated);
- talked less often with other parents about children (more true of low SES isolated than high SES isolated); and
- less likely to perceive themselves as having special problems as parents (more true of low SES isolated than high SES isolated).

There are other characteristics which appeared at first to differentiate isolated rural parents and all others. However, further division of the two groups by socioeconomic status revealed that the following are only true for the low SES isolated parents:

- less likely to be planning a return to school;
- less likely to have talked with teachers;
- less likely to have recently read about child rearing; and
- less likely to have questions about child rearing.

Isolated rural parents and all other parents were similar in these ways:

- number of talks with doctors in past year;
- aspirations held for children (low SES isolated only slightly lower); and
- influences on child's future.

There were two other ways in which isolated rural parents and others appeared to be similar. However, when socioeconomic status was introduced, differences were seen between subgroups:

- awareness of local programs and services (highest for the two high SES subgroups, both the isolated and all others), and
- needed help for parents is not available (high SES isolated rural parents gave a higher response than any other subgroup).

Both the Regional Parenting Surveys and the exploratory school interviews provide a number of different pictures of isolated rural families. Some are

apathetic and withdrawn from formal or informal contacts. Others are almost as involved in contacts as parents anywhere and are more likely to have questions about child rearing and to express their needs for more services. Some families are extremely poor and tend to fit Photiadis' description of "families in retreat." Others are conventional families.

It could be argued that what is needed is a typology of the varieties of "isolated rural families." Are we speaking strictly of physical isolation or social isolation or some combination of both? Do we mean just families who for generations have lived in the same spot or should we also include newcomers, those who have chosen to live in a physically isolated area?

These are some of the questions which schools need to consider in working with parents, especially in the rural counties of Appalachia. Different types of isolated rural families may imply different school-related needs and the development of different kinds of programs.

#6. MINORITY FAMILIES*

Pertinent Literature

Historical Perspective

In order to understand the present relationship between black families and the schools, it is important to look at the history of black people in this country, particularly as it relates to the educational institution.

Black people in the United States have experienced slavery, segregation, and discrimination. The economic and psychological consequences of these experiences have only begun to be reversed in recent decades.

There was, of course, no attempt to provide education for blacks during the time of slavery; in fact, in the later decades of its existence, learning to read was forbidden to slaves. Some did learn, however, in the course of receiving religious training, serving an apprenticeship, or informally (often secretly) through contacts with literate whites or blacks. Partly because education was denied and because they perceived it as preparation for becoming free, many blacks imbued it with a "magical" quality (Lightfoot, 1978, pp. 138-140). After emancipation, education became more possible. But in many parts of the country (especially in the South), it was viewed as appropriate only for the elite, not as a right of all citizens. When public schools were established, black and white children were expected to attend separate schools. Segregation was eliminated first in the North, but remained the rule in the South until the mid-20th century. It has been recognized that black schools were not only separate from white schools but were unequal. Physical facilities

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*This section deals only with black families as they represent the most prominent minority in the Appalachian Region.

were less desirable, funding was lower, and black teachers were less well trained than were white teachers. In addition, the curriculum was often geared toward training for manual occupations. Black children were not expected to go on to higher education and higher occupations (Ogbu, 1981, p. 146).

In 1954 the Supreme Court decision of Brown vs. the Board of Education marked the beginning of a slow process of desegregation of the public schools which is still not complete. Large-scale migrations of blacks from the South to the North and East and of middle-class whites from large cities to the suburbs have resulted in a new kind of segregation. Ironically, at this time, schools are more integrated in the South than in the North (Bresnick, et al, 1978).

In the 1960's the War on Poverty and the Civil Rights movement brought increased attention to the needs and rights of minorities. As a part of new legislation (Title I, Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965) aimed at improving educational opportunities for low-income and minority students, involvement of parents on advisory boards was mandated. Affirmative action practices in employment and in admittance to institutions of higher learning was required of those organizations receiving significant federal funding.

Throughout the history of blacks in this country, there have been evidences of the struggle for black families to attain a good education for their children. Some of the more recent manifestations have had to do with implementing integration practices, demanding community control of schools (in large city systems in the late 1960's) and protesting testing practices and disproportionate placement of black children in special education classes (Bresnick, 1978; Marion, 1979).

Current Situation

Blacks as a group have made notable educational progress in recent decades. More have attended institutions of higher education than ever before; in 1978 1.1 million blacks and 9.2 million whites were enrolled in these institutions. Based on the educational level of parents under the age of 45, it is estimated that, overall, black children currently live in homes of much better educated adults than was true a decade ago (Glick, 1981, p. 108). Yet black students still lag behind white students in educational achievement. "On national standardized tests, black children of varying ages generally score more than 10 percent below the national mean" (Moore, 1981, p. 285).

In other respects also, blacks remained disadvantaged compared to whites. The poverty rate for black families in 1979 was 28 percent, the same as it was in 1969; this was three times as high for black families as for all families. One reason for the lack of an overall increase in income level was the rapid growth in the proportion of black families maintained by a woman as head of the household. In 1980 40 percent of all black families were of this type, as compared to 28 percent in 1970; these families have consistently had the lowest average income of all family types. Per capita income for blacks in 1979 was 63 percent of that for persons of all races (Glick, 1981, pp. 122-123). It is startling to find that 42 percent of all black children live in poverty (Moore, 1981, p. 281).

Health statistics also point up the disadvantaged position of black families. Black mothers are twice as likely never to have had prenatal care. Over 40 percent of all black children do not see a physician even once a year. And blacks have "lower life expectancies, an infant mortality rate nearly twice as high, a greater incidence of hypertension and cancer, and more child fatalities than do whites" (Moore, 1981, pp. 284-285)

Black Families and the Educational Institution

Attitudes of black parents. The literature reveals some difference of opinion regarding the attitudes of black families toward education. According to Hill (1972), minority parents as a whole believe that a good education is the best advantage they can offer their children. The long struggle of blacks for equal educational opportunity certainly seems to bear this out. But Ogbu (1981) believes that many blacks have now become disillusioned. This mainly has to do with the fact that even for those who have achieved high academic goals, full economic participation has not followed. Blacks have experienced a limited opportunity structure, a "job ceiling" which has led to "disillusionment about the real value of schooling" (Ogbu, 1981, p. 149). Ogbu's thesis is that this disillusionment on the part of parents has resulted in their communicating ambivalent attitudes toward schooling to their children. They may urge their child to work hard in school and to get more education than the parents did. But at the same time, their experiences of underemployment and discrimination in the workplace send a different message, one which says, "What's the use of trying?" This has its effect on the child's effort in school and on his/her probability of failure. Ogbu believes structural barriers in the economic institution will have to be eliminated before black children will achieve the degree of success in school they are capable of achieving (Ogbu, 1981).

Lightfoot, however, believes that the relationship between black families and the public schools has always been ambivalent. Despite the lack of evidence of group mobility of blacks through schooling, blacks cling to the hope "that school and education will save our black children from poverty and oppression and give them the skills to overcome racism and injustice" (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 125). At the same time, schools have often been

experienced by blacks as frustrating and oppressive. Black parents have often viewed teachers as uncaring and unwilling to believe in the potential of their children. It is Lightfoot's opinion that both of these views of education represent oversimplified extremes and that, in reality, the black parent's attitude is somewhere "between cynicism and optimism" (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 166).

Attitudes of teachers. Teachers have sometimes believed that black parents (especially low socioeconomic parents) do not value educational attainment for their children. Many white middle-class teachers have perceived black parents as being uninterested, apathetic about their children's achievement in school. Often this perception was related to the fact that the black parents did not frequently attend school functions such as open house, parent-teacher conferences, etc. Other reasons for this nonparticipation (for example, a past history of rejection by the schools or a feeling of being overwhelmed by the bureaucratic organization of the school) were not understood (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 166). A contributing factor to school staff attitudes may well have been the fact that until recent decades, scholars tended to present only a negative view of black families in the literature. Billingsley (1968) and Hill (1972) have pointed out that black families have often been portrayed as disorganized, unstable, and pathological. Even though these negative attributes were described as consequences of the history of slavery and discrimination, Billingsley and Hill believe that positive aspects of black families were ignored until recently. Contributing to the acceptance of a pathological view of the black family was the fact that black families exhibited diversity in family types before this was common and acceptable among white families. In point of fact, the majority of black families have developed viable forms

of family life including successful strategies for coping with adversity. Some of the strengths of black families which have been functional are (a) adaptability of family roles, (b) strong kinship bonds, (c) strong work orientation, (d) strong religious orientation, and (e) strong achievement orientation (Hill, 1972).

Lightfoot believes there is evidence that there are, in reality, no significant differences between black parents and white teachers in educational values. Both value schooling and believe in the relationship between academic achievement and the child's chances in life. "The dissonance between black parents and teachers, therefore, does not lie in conflicting values attached to education but in the misperceptions they have of one another....(the) misperceptions, rarely articulated and confronted, always nurtured by hostile stereotypes, lead to increasing disregard for each other's place in the lives of black children" (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 167).

Future Prospects for Relations Between Black Families and the Schools

Lightfoot believes that schools and families must find ways of coming together. For as long as each views the other as having different values and goals for the children, the children will suffer. She suggests that a useful framework for educators and researchers is that which recognizes the "family as educator." Within this context, the importance of parents and teachers (especially those from very different backgrounds) purposely coming together to get to know and appreciate each other is evident. This may be a very slow, difficult process. An example of the development of parent involvement in a predominantly black urban school was described by Comer (1980). The relationship was built up over a period of years; it began with trivial, superficial

participation by a few and grew to day-to-day involvement by many parents. The presence of parents changed the climate of the school and it became more conducive to children's learning.

Marion (1979) offers some enlightening insights into minority parents' involvement in the schools before and after desegregation. He explains that before 1954 minority parents in the North and West were seldom deeply involved in the schools or the PTA; this was left to the majority white parents. However, in the segregated black schools of the South, minority parents often felt a sense of loyalty and commitment to their children's schools and many were active in the PTA's. With desegregation, minority parents no longer felt as close to their schools. Because of the ill-will which often accompanied desegregation, these parents hesitated to participate in PTA or other school activities. Thus, black parents in both the North and the South, for various reasons, participated little in their children's schooling. This did not mean they were satisfied. Large numbers of black students were placed in special education classes, labeled as "slow learners," and many dropped out before completing their high school education. But many minority parents felt they could do little to improve the situation. It was not until the 1960's when parent involvement was mandated in connection with Title I and PL 94-142 and when social movements created a climate for questioning and demanding one's rights that black parents again became actively involved in the schools.

Marion's (1979) main concern is with special education and the difficulties of encouraging greater involvement of minority parents, most particularly in the IEP (Individual Educational Plan) process. However, many of his specific suggestions for school staffs can be applied more generally, as methods for

building collaboration between minority parents and teachers. Some of these are:

- Teachers should be knowledgeable about the historical development of minority parental attitudes toward education.
- Teachers should have an understanding of minority cultures and the various theories concerning minority families.
- Teachers should recognize the importance of their first contact with the parent, whether by phone or by written communication. Courtesy and respect and a positive approach are crucial.
- In personal contacts with parents, school staffs should "treat minority parents as co-equal. Co-equal means, among other things, a respect for minority parent viewpoints. Extend the courtesy of listening and soliciting input from parents. In the past, school personnel have often told minorities what is going to be done rather than involving them in the decision-making" (Marion, 1979, p. 9).
- Teachers might encourage parents to bring a friend or advocate to a meeting, if they wish.
- The school staff might enlist persons well-known and respected in the community to serve as contacts in order to encourage parents to become involved.
- The schools might hold community workshops to explain school programs and use churches or other community organizations to disseminate information. (A major obstacle to parent participation, according to Marion, relates to a general and specific lack of information.)

Regional Parenting Surveys Data

Within the parenting survey sample of 1,113 respondents, 97 were identified as being members of minoirites; 88 of these were Black, 5 were Asian, and 4 were Hispanic. Race of respondents was determined by interviewers on the basis of observation.* The responses of the minority group were compared

*Interviewers had been provided with definitions of the different racial/cultural groups listed on the interview form. The definitions used were those suggested by the federal government for use in the implementation of affirmative action practices and procedures. If interviewers were uncertain about a racial designation, they were instructed to ask the respondent.

with the responses of all others. Following this, responses were compared by both minority status and socioeconomic level. Among the minority parents, 34 fell into the low socioeconomic category, and 63 fell into the high socioeconomic category. Among the non-minority families, 203 were in the low socioeconomic category and 813 were in the high socioeconomic category.

Parenting Situation

Background characteristics. The minority respondents were significantly different from non-minority respondents on a number of background characteristics. Minority parents were more likely to live in urban rather than rural counties, and more likely to be single parents than were non-minority parents.

Minority Status by Region

	Minority	Non-minority
Rural	21%	61%
Urban	79%	39%

Minority Status by Family Type

	Minority	Non-minority
Single-parent Family	49%	13%
Nuclear Family	47%	80%
Extended Family	3%	7%

Minority respondents had attained a lower level of education but, at the same time, were significantly more likely than non-minority respondents to have plans to return to school.

Educational Level by Minority Status

	Minority	Non-minority
Less than high school	41%	27%
High school or more	59%	73%

Parents Who Plan to Return to School

Minority	Non-minority
47%	28%

When minority and non-minority parents were viewed within low or high socioeconomic level, there was a greater tendency for single parents to be found within the low SES minority subgroup (68%) than in the high SES minority subgroup (40%). The relationship between plans to return to school and minority status held for both low SES and high SES minority respondents.

Parents Who Plan to Return to School

Low SES		High SES	
Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority
41%	15%	50%	31%

Preparation for parenthood. The majority of both minority (59%) and non-minority parents (68%) said they had not had a clear idea of what parenting meant before becoming parents. Most respondents in both groups wanted to pass on some advice about parenting to their children (minority, 79%; non-minority, 81%). What they wanted to pass on was (a) be ready, not too young; (b) have patience and understanding; and (c) have love and the ability to express love.

Present parenting situation. Minority and non-minority respondents were virtually identical in the extent to which they shared responsibility for their child with other adult(s) besides spouse (minority, 87%; non-minority, 85%). Who were these persons with whom the parenting responsibility was shared? There were few differences between the two groups. Both gave highest mention to a "maternal grandparent" and next highest mention to "a relative other than the child's grandparent." Minority parents were somewhat less likely to name a "paternal grandparent."

Persons with Whom Responsibility for Child was Shared

	Minority	Non-minority
Older sibling	29%	31%
Maternal grandparent	57%	50%
Paternal grandparent	19%	27%
Other relatives	44%	38%
Friend/neighbor	26%	27%
Worker in child's organization	7%	10%

The high likelihood that most the respondents shared responsibility for child rearing with one or more other adults remained the case when respondents were divided by SES and minority status. The low SES, non-minority subgroup was just slightly less likely to do so. A look at whom parents shared responsibility with revealed more differences. Naming "child's older sibling" was closely related to low SES and was most common among low SES minority parents (44%). "Maternal grandparent," while important for all subgroups, was especially important to the high SES minority parent (54%). Naming a "paternal grandparent" was more common among the high SES subgroups. And the low SES minority (9%) and the high SES non-minority (10%) subgroups were most likely to name a worker in an organization the child was associated with.

Formal Contacts

Contacts with teachers. Little difference was found between minority and non-minority parents in the frequency of their talks with the child's teacher during the past year. Slightly over two-thirds in both groups had talked to the teacher often or fairly often. Both groups were also alike in their attitudes toward these talks (very helpful: minority, 61%; non-minority,

58%). Yet only 25 percent of the minority parents and 32 percent of the non-minority parents were satisfied with these talks; the others indicated they could be improved.

When viewed by SES and race, the stronger association between SES and frequency of talks with teachers is apparent.

Frequency of Talks with Teachers

	Low SES		High SES	
	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority
Talked often or fairly often	53%	54%	75%	78%

The positive attitudes toward talks with teachers remained for all subgroups, although high SES subgroups were slightly higher.

Contacts with doctors. In regard to number of medical contacts, the minority parent and non-minority parent were again found to be very much alike. The highest percent in both groups (minority, 52%; non-minority, 43%) had one medical contact; two or more medical contacts were named by 48 percent of the minority parents and by 56 percent of the non-minority parents. The frequency with which parents had talked to a doctor (about child) within the past year was not significantly different, although minority parents (37%) were slightly more likely not to have talked to a doctor at all, compared to non-minority parents (28%). As was the case with parent-teacher talks, parents' talks with doctors were rated very positively (very helpful: minority, 63%; non-minority, 62%; somewhat helpful: minority, 25%; non-minority, 27%). But less than one-third of both groups were satisfied with these talks and believed they could not be improved.

By SES and race, one subgroup stands out as being most likely to have consulted a doctor (regarding child) in the past year. This was the high SES non-minority group. Positive attitudes toward parent-doctor talks were

generally true within each subgroup, with high SES parents being just slightly higher. Again, the majority of parents within each subgroup indicated that the talks could be better, with low SES minority parents the most likely to say so.

Organizational memberships. Over two-thirds of the respondents in both groups belonged to one or more organizations in the community (minority, 72%; non-minority, 69%). Of those who did belong to organizations, minority parents were somewhat less likely than non-minority parents to belong to an organization which provided help and advice on child rearing (minority, 47%; non-minority, 60%). There was general agreement among those who did belong that these organizations are helpful because (a) they provide an opportunity to find out what our children are doing, (b) they provide an opportunity to discuss/compare with other parents, and (c) they provide speakers and others who give advice.

Important differences in organizational membership were discovered when minority and non-minority parents were divided by SES.

Membership in Community Organizations

	Low SES		High SES	
	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority
Belonged to one or more community organizations	62%	37%	76%	76%

High SES subgroups were more likely than low SES subgroups to belong to organizations. Least likely to belong was the low SES, non-minority subgroup. Of those who did belong to organizations, the high SES non-minority group (61%) was most apt to belong to an organization that provided help with child rearing. Approximately 50 percent of each of the other subgroups belonged to such an organization.

Awareness of programs and services. Few parents, either minority or non-minority, were aware of programs in the community that offered "preparation for parenthood" (minority, 23%; non-minority, 30%); "classes for more effective parenting" (minority, 6%; non-minority, 13%); and "programs to help parents meet their own needs" (both, 26%). Parents were most aware of "programs/services that help families in difficult situations" (minority, 53%; non-minority, 56%).

Degree of awareness did not change significantly when both SES and race were taken into account.

Informal Contacts

Contacts with other parents. There was little difference between minority and non-minority parents in frequency of talks with other parents. Almost one-half said they talked often (minority, 48%; non-minority, 45%). Twenty-four percent of the minority parents and 33 percent of the non-minority parents talked fairly often. Both minority and non-minority parents were very positive about the value of these talks (helpful: minority, 80%; non-minority, 86%). Reasons given for their positive attitudes were also similar. These talks made it possible for them (a) to share, compare experiences, and (b) to learn from others in like situations.

By SES and race, it was revealed that high SES non-minority parents (83%) and low SES minority parents (79%) talked most frequently to other parents. Low SES non-minority parents talked least.

Frequency of Talks with Other Parents

	Low SES		High SES	
	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority
Often or fairly often	79%	61%	69%	83%

Availability of a confidant. Most parents in both groups said they had a favorite relative or close friend with whom they liked to discuss the sample child or child rearing in general (minority, 80%; non-minority, 74%). The most likely candidates for the confidant were also very much the same for both groups. They were, in rank order, (1) a relative other than child's grandparents, (2) a friend/neighbor, and (3) a maternal grandparent.

Viewed by SES as well as race, one subgroup--low SES non-minority parents--stood out as least likely to have a condidant (63%).

Media contacts. Overall, most parents did not often use reading as a source of help in child rearing. Minority parents were slightly less likely than non-minority parents to have recently read about child rearing in a magazine, book, or newspaper. However, when minority and non-minority parents were divided into low and high socioeconomic levels, high SES was strongly associated with reading for both minorities and non-minorities.

Parents Who had Recently Read about Child Rearing

	Low SES		High SES	
	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority
In a magazine	26%	19%	35%	49%
In a pamphlet/ newsletter	21%	5%	17%	21%
In a newspaper	12%	11%	22%	30%
In a book	12%	15%	27%	30%

Parental Attitudes and Needs

Attitudes. "Many people say that in today's world, all parents need help in raising children." The great majority of both minority and non-minority parents agreed with this statement (minority, 84%; non-minority, 77%). This

finding remained true, in general, within each of the four subgroups (SES by race), although the low SES non-minority subgroup was least likely to agree (70%). The most frequently mentioned source of advice and help for both groups was "own parents or in-laws." Other sources were varied and included "other family," "friends," "church," "doctors," "teachers," and "books."

Traits of the ideal parent were agreed by both groups to include (a) has patience and understanding, (b) loves children, and (c) spends time with children.

Aspirations. Minority and non-minority parents held similar aspirations for their children. Slightly over one-half in both groups wanted their child to attain a college education or beyond, one-fourth said "as far as child wishes and is able to go," and only 14 percent of the minority parents and 19 percent of the non-minority parents indicated they would be satisfied with a high school diploma. When viewed by SES and race, the low SES subgroups were more satisfied with a high school education than were the high SES subgroups. However, the highest response within each subgroup remained "college or more." Highest aspirations were expressed by the high SES minority parents.

How Far Would You Like Child to go in School?

	Low SES		High SES	
	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority
High school graduate	21%	33%	11%	15%
College or more	50%	43%	61%	54%
As far as child can and wants	24%	20%	27%	26%
Vocational	3%	1%	2%	4%
Other	3%	2%	0%	1%

All parents wanted their children as adults to be (a) caring/loving; (b) respectable, trustworthy; and (c) own person.

There were similarities but also some differences in the persons or institutions minority and non-minority parents perceived as having "a great deal" of influence on their child's future. Minority parents were less likely than non-minority parents to name a spouse and more likely to name the government.

Who or What Will Influence Child's Future "A Great Deal"?

	Minority	Non-Minority
Respondent	79%	75%
Spouse	52%	71%
Schools	68%	68%
Government	47%	20%
Anyone or anything else	39%	37%

When the two groups were further divided by socioeconomic level, the lesser tendency to name spouse as an important influence was seen to be confined largely to the low SES minority group. The perceived higher influence of government remained more true for the minority than the non-minority subgroups. The high SES subgroups were more likely to name "another" influence besides those presented by the interviewer. It is also of interest that belief in the influence of schools was generally high across all subgroups, but was highest for the low SES minority parents.

Who or What Will Influence Child's Future "A Great Deal"?

	Low SES		High SES	
	Minority	Non-Minority	Minority	Non-Minority
Respondent	76%	65%	81%	78%
Spouse	26%	65%	65%	73%
Schools	76%	68%	63%	67%
Government	53%	25%	44%	19%
Anything or Anyone Else	32%	24%	43%	40%

Perceived needs. Minority and non-minority parents responded in a similar manner to questions aimed at information about perceived needs. From one-fifth to one-fourth of both groups replied in the affirmative to each question.

"Yes" Responses to Perceived Need Questions

	Minority	Non-Minority
Do you feel you have special problems as a parent?	25%	22%
Do you have unanswered questions about parenting?	19%	24%
Is there any needed help for parents that is not available locally?	19%	23%

Viewed within socioeconomic levels, the most dramatic finding was that low SES minority parents were much more likely than the other three subgroups to feel they had "special problems as a parent." "Having questions" was more closely associated with high SES than with minority status. Little difference was found in response to "needed help which is not available."

"Yes" Responses to Perceived Need Questions

	Low SES		High SES	
	Minority	Non-minority	Minority	Non-minority
Do you feel you have special problems as a parent?	38%	16%	17%	23%
Do you have unanswered questions about parenting?	15%	13%	21%	27%
Is there any needed help for parents that is not available?	18%	17%	19%	25%

Exploratory School Interviews

In the six schools visited, there were only a very few or no minority families represented. Therefore, it was not possible to obtain the views of school staffs regarding their experiences with minority families.

It is planned that some schools in another county with significant minority populations will be visited in the near future. This will enable us to include the school perspective in our understanding of the needs of minority parents and children.

During the last meeting of our School-Family Relations Advisory Group, there was some discussion of minorities other than blacks. Mentioned in particular were the recent immigrants into some of the cities in the Region, namely, the Vietnamese and Laotian families. It was felt that there is a need to help both teachers and parents in the schools involved to understand the cultures of the newcomers and to be willing to assist them in adjusting to their new environment.

Summary and Discussion

In the Regional Parenting Surveys, minority respondents were found to differ from non-minority respondents in the following ways:

- more likely to live in urban rather than rural counties,
- more likely to be members of single-parent families,
- less likely to have completed high school,
- more likely to be planning to return to school in the future, and
- more likely to perceive the government as having a significant influence on the child's future.

The minority and non-minority groups were similar in their:

- tendency to share responsibility for child with others,
- frequency of talks with teachers,
- frequency of talks with doctors,
- membership in community organizations,
- awareness of local programs and services (low for both),
- frequency of talks with other parents,
- availability of a confidant,
- use of reading materials as a source of help in child rearing (low for both), and
- aspirations held for children (high for both).

However, when minority and non-minority responses were analyzed within socio-economic level, a number of additional insights were gained. The following were strongly associated with high SES for both the minority and the non-minority parents:

- frequent talks with teachers,
- membership in community organizations,
- use of reading materials as sources of help in child rearing, and
- having unanswered questions about child rearing.

The high SES minority parents held higher educational aspirations for their children than any of the other subgroups. Low SES minority parents stood out as:

- most likely to perceive themselves as having "special problems as a parent,"
- most likely (of the four subgroups) to believe the schools will have "a great deal" of influence on their children's future, and
- most likely (along with the high SES non-minority group) to talk frequently with other parents.

There are, thus, many indications from our data that minority parents value schooling and want their children to achieve a good education. Minority parents were more likely than non-minority parents to be planning to return to school themselves, minority parents held higher educational aspirations for their children than did non-minority parents within each socioeconomic level. And all minority parents, but especially the low SES minority parents, believed that the schools would have "a great deal" of influence on their children's future.

The data also highlight the importance of understanding the differences to be found within the minority groups. For example, the findings that low SES minority parents talk very frequently with other parents and that high SES minority parents are more likely to belong to community organizations or to read about child rearing suggest different approaches to be used in working with these parents. Some may respond best to personal contact by a teacher or a community liaison; others may be reached more easily through community organizations or the distribution of reading materials.

Both the literature and the School-Family Relations Advisory Group stressed the value of teachers and other staff understanding the historical experiences and culture of the minority families with whom they work.

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